

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

MORTIMER & FRANCES COLLINS.





•			
•			



YOU PLAY ME FALSE.

A flovel.

BY

MORTIMER AND FRANCES COLLINS.

Miranda. "Sweet lord, you play me talse."
Ferdinand. "No, my dear'st love
I would not for the world."
THE TEMPEST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. 1.





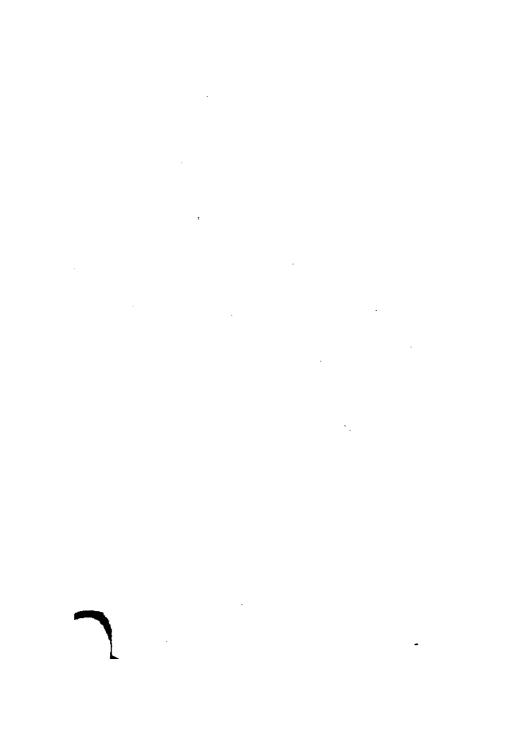
LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON, Publishers in Ordinary to Ber Majesty the Queen.

1878.

(All Rights Reserved.)

251. e. 7/3.



то

PERCY COTTON,

This Book is Pedicated

IN GRATITUDE AND LOVE.

	•	

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPT	ER ·						PAGE
I.	THE LONELY LAWN	1	-	-	-	-	1
II.	CHARLES AND CLA	RA	-	-	-	-	9
III.	THE PALE PARSON		-	-	-	-	27
IV.	TWO GENTLEMEN	AT VEN	ICE	-	-	•	47
v.	ADELA COURTENA	Y	-	-	-	-	76
VI.	A WIDOW'S CAREE	R	-	-	-	-	84
VII.	EDUCATION	-	-	-	-	-	97
VIII.	BLETHIN CASTLE	-	-	-	-	-	116
IX.	THE MERMAID	-	-	-	-	-	133
X.	WHAT SHE THOUG	HT OF	IT ALL	-	-	-	173
XI.	SCANDAL IN BLET	HIN VII	LLAGE	-	-	-	189
XII	LIMBO ROW	-	-	-	-	-	208
XIII.	TUBBS' TROUBLES	-	-	-	-	-	222
XIV	BLETHIN HOUSE	-	-	-	-	-	228
XV.	AT THE BOOK SHO	P	-	-	-	-	240
XVI	A CURIOUS TRIO	-	-	-	_	_	256

chestnut, hollow with age; an oak in the happy prime of its centuries, thirty feet around its royal waist, not a bit of dead wood in it, not an acornless spray. These three trees were lords of the lawn. Syria, and Spain, and England were well represented.

The lawn was separated from the grounds of the house by a narrow arm of the lake, easily crossed by a punt. The house—old, red, irregular, built in Henry VII.'s time, was picturesque and comfortable. Who lived there may be left for awhile. We are on a lawn now, with two children.

The boy is about twelve, tall for his age, light-haired, blue-eyed, as active as a grey-hound. The girl is dark of hair, with olive complexion, strongly scintillating eyes, of a colour that you may see in the depth of that rare gem a dark-blue diamond, a figure rather plump, though her hands and feet are small.

There is slight difference between their ages.

They are first cousins.

Many, many summer and winter hours had these two spent upon the island-lawn, with the three great trees as imaginary friends, as houses, castles, enchanted islands, ogres' dens, everything that the fertile, fanciful, indefatigable whim of childhood could make them. What a lovely house was the hollow chestnut, inside which they could make a bonfire, and roast its fruit, and see the light flicker into curious corners, where the young shoots came up to strengthen the venerable bark. chestnut was a favourite in cold weather. Charlie and Clara could crouch in its corners and play at being a pair of squirrels, and munch the provisions they had brought over from Draxfell as if they were nuts. a lovely place to tell stories in. The old tree creaked above them in windy days; it

was a stubborn old chestnut, quite beyond the age for cutting into guitars. Yet what would Walter Landor have said?

'The youthful poet does but little good:

Carve your guitar from ancient chestnut wood.'

And there was music in that mighty tree, as the children unconsciously felt; for had not its strong roots drunk the juice of the earthmother for centuries, and had not its crests of lustrous leaf echoed for centuries the music of the myriad winds of heaven.

Charlie and Clara liked that cavernous chestnut on chill days when the east wind blow. But on warm, indolent days, when the poised dragon-fly was too lazy to dart, and the trout slept in his pool, and the heron stood on one leg so long that he forgot he had another, then the cedar was the favourite tree. Oh what depths of dark green coolness beneath the spread of those level boughs!

Lebanon. Charlie and Clara had heard or read of the cedars of Lebanon; they knew that Lebanon ought to be some mystic and magical and marvellous mountain; they dreamt themselves there, as they lay beneath the great black fragrant cedar, and had visions of angels, while the drowsy gold of noon was broken into a cool shimmer by the impenetrable tree. Yes; these two loved their cedar.

But the oak! That was the tree for merry days, when all the air was full of life. It was such a noble fellow to climb. Charlie, sure of foot as squirrel, could leap from branch to branch of it. Clara had to submit to the humiliation of holding on to a rope which Charlie had fixed to a big branch, When she had once overcome the first difficulty of ascent, she could go with Charlie ever so far up. The higher the children ascended this tall, strong, serious tree, the

nobler was their outlook. Up and down the winding solitary lake they could see the broad meadows, the plashy pools, the grave heron and flashing kingfisher, the circling swallows on the shore; big red oxen in the meadows, and fallow deer in the park; far westward a town on a hill, the houses climbing up to a castle and a church.

This was their daily view for years. This island-lawn was their refuge — more their home than Draxfell Hall, where they slept, and ate irregular meals, and were treated with careless kindness by the old housekeeper, Kezia Gibbon.

They did not know who they were. They had no knowledge of fathers and mothers. Mistress Gibbon, a tender old soul, was their only controller. She saw that they were well fed and well clothed, and left all else to Providence. She had her reasons.

A cynic of this scientific age would doubt-

less say that if you leave a child to Providence, it will go to the devil. This only shows what is the scientific cynic's idea of Providence he dare not say God. The devil is the main motive-power with certain philosophers. These two children, Charlie and Clara, were left very much to God; their fathers and mothers left them quite alone; they went together into God's beautiful world, and played games, and told stories, and watched wild creatures, and made friends of trees, and were quite healthy and quite ignorant. At an age when some children are quite wise, Charlie and Clara knew nothing in the world about compound addition and the Catechism. They were young barbarians, though of a high aristocratic race, and dwelling in the centre of England. Charlie could swim like an otter, and climb like a squirrel, and run like a greyhound. Alas! he had not the least idea

what 17 cwt. 3 qrs. 12 lbs. of snuff would cost at $11\frac{3}{4}$ d. an ounce. Clara could run too, ay, and climb, and perchance the child could swim; but she had never learnt to dance, or to play the piano. Now here are a couple of young heathen! Isn't it shocking? How did it happen? Cannot we punish Charlie and Clara's parents for their infinite iniquity in thus deserting them? Should not the school-board inspectors interfere? But luckily there was no school-board in that neighbourhood.



CHAPTER II.

CHARLES AND CLARA.

There these two children, through long summer days, Make a fair world, build hourly halls of wonder From water and air, soft light and silver haze,

Arch of the rainbow, sable belt of thunder, All that dear Mother Nature offers those Whom fate from home's delight has torn asunder.

HE man who should attempt to punish either Tom Drax or Jack Drax, would find he had weighty work to do. They were twins. The result was curious. They loved each other so well

that they were in a state of chronic quarrel. Tom, legally the elder, would not accept his rights; so he never lived at Draxfell. Jack would not live at Draxfell either. So they knocked about the world together, insepar-They were big able and irreconcilable. fellows; splendid gentlemen of the old school; judges of horses and wine; quite incapable of science and literature. We, who deem ourselves so much wiser than our forefathers, need not scorn this older type of the English race. They could fight, woo, hunt, dine, manage their estates so as to make of their dependents friends, though they could not be brought to understand spectrum analysis, or vote by ballot, or the elegancies of modern literature. Tom Drax and Jack Drax read no books. It may perhaps be said they had no ideas. Yet it is noticeable by the unprejudiced student of humanity that less of man has his value. To talk to

him is like ploughing fresh earth; you get the smell of the unfurrowed soil.

The Drax brothers married, and were more inseparable and irreconcilable after than before. Tom Drax married a charming fair-haired Guernsey girl, Lily Brock. Jack Drax married a Kendal quakeress, Susan Braithwaite. The marriages were simultaneous; the poetic lady from the Norman isle, and the puritan from the banks of Kent river, became fast friends. Their friendship was not destined to last in this world; both died early, each leaving a child. The Drax brothers, having wept and quarrelled, sent their children down to Draxfell, and determined to travel together. They wandered all over the world. Charlie and Clara might have been absolute orphans for aught their two errant fathers did for them. But God is the father of all orphans, and He did not forget these two. They were very happy.

Considering what fathers and mothers too often are in these days, there are some children very well cared for and brought up, who might perhaps envy the orphans. Charlie and Clara grew up in a wild healthy fashion; there may have been nothing poetic in their natures—but perpetual intercourse with river and tree, with bird and beast, must bring some sort of poetry.

Clara was the daughter of the fair Guernsey Lily; the dark blood of some Norman ancestor had reappeared in her. Charlie sprang from the Kendal quakeress. But the Braithwaite stock has had strong irregular scions—as witness the famous author of 'Barnabæ Itinerarium.' Probably the quakerism was an incidental warp of a strong tree, for the friends have produced some original thinkers—some men that one would rather have as friends than as foes.

There is one at least now living whose name will occur to everybody: long may he live to support those whom he despises, and swear decorously, and talk boyish paradox in manly English.

It was a serene summer afternoon, sultry and delicious. Charlie and Clara had been on their island all day. They had climbed the oak, they had caught dragon-flies, they had taken minnows from the water, they had waded about, taking off their shoes and stockings and enjoying the cool feel of the sweet water and the silver sand. They had eaten all they brought with them, they were tired, so they lay on the grass by the margin of the lake, under a shadowy pendulous willow that had never been pollarded to make miserable hurdles for imprisoning sheep, and Clara said—

'Now, Charlie, tell me a story.'

Charlie stretched. He was enjoying that

unimaginable inexhaustible indolence which falls softly upon us in serene and sunny times. But though the boy's limbs were lazy his brain was alert: and that is the idle mood I love. Can you not imagine Homer telling the 'Odyssey' to whoever loved to listen, in the shadow of a rock by the sea?

'You know old Wicks, Clara?' said Charlie.

Now old Wicks (he was not so very old) was a fat fool who kept a little inn not far from the gates of Draxfell. He was a great nuisance, for he encouraged poachers and thieves of all sorts, and lived with a woman who was not his wife, and was a surly brute with an atom of soul in a hogshead of body.

'Well, I should think I did,' said Clara.
Go on.'

'Listen curiously, miss, or you won't hear a very important piece of news. To-day, while you and I were catching minnows, there came to the Maypole Inn a mysterious traveller. He was dressed entirely in black velvet, but wore a scarlet cap, and he rode upon a zebra. He stopped. Old Wicks heard his ostler make a shout as this traveller rode up; he waddled out as fast as he could, but his wife and his barmaid were there before him, though the barmaid was upstairs at her looking-glass half a minute before. They were all amazed. A zebra you know, Clara, is a wonderful animal.'

- 'What is it like, Charlie?'
- 'A horse as big as an elephant, with stripes of all colours, and eyes that throw out fire.'
 - 'O, how I should like to see one!'
- 'Would you?' he said, rather disappointed at the ineffectual issue of his imaginary picture. 'You don't know. Fancy a zebra, Clara, with a giant in black velvet riding him, and a scarlet cap on his head.'

- 'You never said he was a giant before, nor yet that the red cap was on the zebra's head,' retorted Clara.
- 'O, if you're going to make fun of me like that, I shan't go on,' says the young gentleman.

Whereupon of course little Clara cajoles and flatters him as if she were ten years older, and he suffers himself to be persuaded to proceed.

- 'The stranger looked at Wicks:
- "Is there anything fit to eat and drink in your house?"
 - "No, sir," he said.
- 'Mrs. Wicks pinched him, whereon he knocked her down—a delicate attention to which she was not altogether unaccustomed.
- "Every one who answers my questions," said the stranger, "is obliged to speak the truth. It is awkward, I know, as people

don't like telling truth. But I really can't help it. Wicks!"

- "Yes, sir."
- "Are you of any use to anybody?"
- "No, sir."
 - " Then, vanish!"
- 'Wicks was gone. Where that huge mass of flesh had stood there was nothing! Mrs. Wicks, the barmaid, the ostler, rushed wildly about looking for him, but could see no trace of him. The man on the zebra, in black velvet, looked on for a while amused, then he took off his red cap to Mrs. Wicks, and said:
- "Good-morning. The man Wicks is close by you, but you cannot see him, and will never see him again. I have turned him into a ghost."
 - 'Then he rode away.'
- 'What fun!' said Clara. 'I should think Mrs. Wicks was very glad. Don't you vol. 1.

think that he is needed by a good thing to paid a lateral people into ghosts that way. I am once I need I could turn that pale paid on taken a ghost.

justice parameters was a mystery in the mightonial He was in fact, a Roman Catholic puters. He helped in a village a undergram than thereist, being in ill health, and requiring the air that blows over no soil save the primaral granite, and seeing these two dubling numbering about, drinking in health and happy thoughts but without spiritual matthem, he rearned to do something for the good of their souls. Somehow it was the giffs and that troubled him most. He had a highly inhished manner, for he was no chip of the ingred Maynooth flock, but a cultivated donner, and he had called at Draxfoll Hall with a request that he might see the pictures; and old Keziah Gibbon to be a real gentleman. When he

deplored the absence of the family, and the wild way in which the two children were growing up, Keziah's heart was won. He frequently spoke to the children in field and wood, talking to them about birds and flowers—always pleasantly—yet somehow without attracting them in any degree. There was something about him which neither boy nor girl liked.

I have described the amusements of these children in summer—they enjoyed winter just as thoroughly. Draxfell Mere was shallow, and froze with the first sharp frost. The frosts came early, for the old house is twenty miles from town and railway. Charlie and Clara had enjoyed their slides on the ice, but skating would never have occurred to them if Clara, one evening as they sat by the hot kitchen fire with Keziah, had not taken a fancy to rummage out a big cupboard. From it came many odd things

- —dog-whips, powder-flasks, a gun or two, some skates of various sizes and in various stages of decomposition.
- 'What are these things, Keziah?' said Charlie.
- 'Lord bless 'ee, Master Charles, it's what volk do run about on ice with, tempting Providence, I say. Now don't 'ee look at them.'

But Charlie would look at them. 'He found a pair not much too large for him, being a strapping boy for his age. He was delighted.

- 'We'll try these to-morrow, Clarry,' he said. 'I expect they're so big I shall make a hole in the ice, but you can come and pull me out.'
 - 'But I want to skate too,' said Clara.
- 'So you shall. We'll go up to old Crockford's in the village to-morrow, and take the lot, and make him file them to fit us.

That's the plan. And now about these guns.'

The boy found three—a double-barrel, a single-barrel, and a duck-gun. There was also a store of powder and shot; and as the powder had been lying all the while so near the kitchen fire, it was quite dry.

'Clara!' he cried enthusiastically, 'now I'll have some shooting. I've never fired a gun yet, and think of the woodcock, and snipe, and wild-fowl that come to our lake. Keziah, what were you about not to tell me of these guns before?'

'Lord bless 'ee, Master Charles, you're no more fit to shoot off a gun than a babe unborn. I know you'll shoot Miss Clara, and both be brought home dead corpses.'

Keziah Gibbon's protestations did not prevent the self-willed boy from carrying out his wishes. Tom Crockford, the blacksmith at Draxfell village, not only put the guns in

order for him, but came down to the lake and showed him how to use them. Tom Crockford also altered the skates so that there was a pair for Clara's feet—and very pretty little feet were Clara's.

And now winter, always enjoyable to this healthy, strong-blooded girl and boy, became twenty times as enjoyable as ever. were down at the lake at sunrise, waiting for wild-fowl. They had splendid sport. Charlie permitted Clara, in his grand manner, to use the single-barrel under his direction; and how delighted she was when she shot her first snipe! They were just at the age when the boy tyrannises over the girl; a few years more and the process will be reversed. Charlie developed a true eye and a quick finger on the trigger, and old Keziah became quite reconciled to the guns, and eager to see what game he had brought home. She was an adept in cookery, and gave the children

wonderful game-suppers on those wild winter nights. Outside the wind might whistle and the snow fall fast; but Draxfell Hall had defied the winds and snows of more winters than I care to count.

Then the skating! That was a success, though it began with ignominious failure. The first day Charlie sat on the bank, and strapped on his skates, and made a wild attempt to start. Of course he sat down with emphasis, crushing his ice-cushion so that he was particularly damp behind. At that age, who cares? Boyhood is a great thing. I suppose, in the days of Methuselah, when elderly folk (before Mr. Thoms's appearance) reached their thousand, a fellow was a boy for nearly the first two centuries of his life. How delicious! Fancy enjoying mischief and jam, and robbing orchards, and playing truant and cricket, and having tips and holidays, and voting girls a nuisance,

and being flogged, and crawling through jolly old Virgil and Euclid, for a couple of hundred years! What a treat it would be if one couldn't come of age without passing the *Pons Asinorum*. Who would not break down over that isosceles triangle?

But the skating! Charlie soon conquered the difficulty, and caught the curve which is requisite for balancing yourself on ice. That curve is a parabola; but many first-rate skaters have never discovered the fact. So soon as Charlie had found himself steady, he strapped on Clara's skates, and gradually taught her the art. It took a few days, for Clara was at that time rather plump, and in skating, much depends on the centre of gravity. But the time came soon when she could skate as easily as she could walk; and then it would have been a pleasant sight to see the boy and girl in wild career over the ice, chasing each other, playing all

manner of antics. But no one was there to see.

No one? Well, I except the pale parson. This mysterious priest used to come quietly down behind the thick laurels, and hollies, and yews that guarded Draxfell north-eastward, and watch the children for hours together. He had a fixed idea about them. He was devoted to his Church, and he had designed to be a missionary. Some inexplicable malady had attacked him, for which the doctors could only prescribe mental rest and a bracing climate. And it had been his hope, and the hope of great men in the Church of Rome who knew and encouraged him, that he should go out as a proselytising priest into tropic lands. It was a sad fall for him. But now, when he saw these two young heretics, deserted by their fathers, left to the care of an illiterate old woman, he wondered whether his patron saint had not interceded for him that he might do missionary work even in England, and bring two souls and a fine property into the bosom of the Church.

But Charlie and Clara were so decidedly disinclined to listen to him, though he talked only of weather, and wild-fowl and the like, that he felt foiled. So he waited and watched. He had nothing else to do, except study the catechetic literature of the Latin schism. The two children little guessed that the pale parson whom they met casually, once or twice a week in their walks, was almost always on their track. Yet he was; thinking to himself: 'A boy left alone like that is sure to make a fool of himself in some way. And the girl's foolish time will soon So I shall have my chance, if I wait.'



CHAPTER III.

THE PALE PARSON.

And if their solitary pleasure knows

Some interruption, it is just the touch

That, like a dream, makes perfect our repose.

For no one should be happy overmuch, And no one should deem happiness the thing Above all others for the hand to clutch.

E waited. He was not acting quite alone. He had put the state of affairs before his spiritual superior,

Father Laxman, well known as the most sociable and scholarly dignitary who has been 'verted from England to Rome.

Father Laxman confesses countesses delicately, preaches sermons that result in miraculous collections, and has a very subtle - flavoured wit at the few choice dinner-parties at which his benign countenance appears. Father Laxman, having keen discernment of character, had perceived in Eustace Theyre—the pale parson, hitherto unnamed—a fine enthusiasm, and was disappointed when the young man's work was stopped by disease. When, however, his protégé sent him up detailed accounts of the position of affairs at Draxfell, Father Laxman thought that he might not after all be thrown away in that neighbourhood. received reports from him, and sent instructions. An estate situate like that of Draxfell was worth an effort. The owner and his brother abroad, enjoying themselves as eccentric Englishmen will: the two children left to the care of an old housekeeper, and

allowed to do just what they liked. It was a grand opportunity.

Father Laxman sits in his study, somewhere in South Kensington, looking through a pile of letters, one afternoon. He is a clear-complexioned, bright-eyed man of about sixty, with a touch of humour in the curl of his lip. His hand is small, white, plump, with a rose flush in it of which a lady need not be ashamed. On his table are many veritably venerable folios of the Church: but hidden beneath their fine Catholic calf, a keen eye might catch the yellow corner of a French novel. Not that Father Laxman cared much for that sort of thing, but it served to refresh his jaded brain when he could not read his favourite poet, Horace, or his favourite essayist, Montaigne.

'All roads lead to Rome.' A love of scholarship and quietude led Father Laxman

into the priesthood. When he came to the front it was found that he had a remarkable aptitude for the dinner-table and the confessional. His talents were not wrapped up in a napkin. He was at once reported to the Vatican as a great hope in the ultimate inevitable conversion of this heretic island. Antonelli put a red cross against his name in that mysterious black book with a locked gold clasp that he never parts with, even in sleep . . . and added certain mysterious ciphers.

Father Laxman, with many letters unopened on his table, and a decanter of some ruddy wine at his elbow, balanced Eustace Theyre's letter between his finger and thumb, and soliloquised:

'Rome is the magnet of the world,' he said to himself. 'It is the Catholic cobweb that catches all stray flies. It has caught me . . . me, who thought myself absolutely

I am thoroughly comfortable; I read Browning's "Bishop Blougram" and smile; I play at confession with young ladies of the higher aristocracy; I dine with their fathers, and am generally the guest of the evening. It is not a great life; but what is a man to do? I fell into a groove, and couldn't struggle out of it. Now, it is too late. A revolution at sixty is absurd.

'This boy Eustace. I like him. I am almost sorry for him. Now for his letter. Ah! the young people are not less rude to him. Perhaps they have the wisdom of instinct. If I were not in the spider's web I should not venerate the spider. However, as Eustace is useless elsewhere, I may as well advise him what to do in that barbaric country.

'Let me see. Children about twelve.

He had better get that old housekeeper to let him give them a little education. That's the thin end of the wedge. The girl is the heiress, luckily; if he gets hold of that girl in time he may do a world of good. I'm afraid he's apt to fly off at a tangent, like me. I should fly at once if I could decide which way to go. But if one gets once into the Rome cobweb, one's wings are injured. I'm done for. I know it, only too well. I might have been Lord Chancellor, or Archbishop of Canterbury; I shall only be Bishop of Cappadocia in partibus infide-lium.

'Now, what shall I write to this boy? It is so difficult to deal with imperfectly-developed intellect. I must try.'

He took a quill—a good sound feather of the goose. He cut it deftly, with a keen steel blade. He wrote in clear though curious characters....

'EUSTACE,

'Teach those children. The old housekeeper will delight thereat. Draw them slowly into learning. Authority grows when not too soon asserted. Make the boy a soldier. Make the girl a saint. A word to the wise.

'SIMPLICIUS L.'

Having written this letter, Father Laxman rang the bell, and a buxom yet demure handmaiden brought him coffee.

When Father Laxman's brief note reached Eustace Theyre, he recognised in it the same idea as his own. He also had desired to teach these children something. But they would not look at him—or if they did, it was as a watchdog looks at a tramp. Here lay the difficulty. Still, he waited.

'Patience, and shuffle the cards.' These old adages have what Earl Russell, in an

unforgettable aphorism, called 'the wisdom of many and the wit of one.' Eustace Theyre's winning move was quite the result of patience. It chanced thus.

'Clarry,' said Charlie, 'look at that big bird.' They were in the punt together. The bird in question, it was afterwards found out, was a merganser. 'Now hold on, I'll have him.'

But he made a mistake in his leverage on the boat, and the heavy gun took him over, and Clara shrieked (you may be sure), and the pale parson, without taking off his boots, swam to the rescue from the opposite shore, and caught Charlie just in time to save him from utter collapse. Why the pale parson was there, nobody asked. But he went home with the children to dry himself, and old Keziah Gibbon made him very cosy; and that night he, with his quiet wise talk, so far got over Charlie and

Clara, that they absolutely offered themselves as his pupils. They began to feel that they wanted to know something they could not learn from nature only. It is only the child of genius that Nature deigns to teach.

'Well,' said Eustace Theyre gaily, 'I will teach you anything I know. It is not very much. When you are tired of me you can dismiss me. If you choose me as your master, you will have to do what I tell you; but then you can always say "I won't," and then I'm your master no longer.'

Next day, however, Charlie and Clara went over to the island in their boat in rather a glum fashion, and held a council. Night, which according to Sappho brings many curious things, is apt to bring change of mind. The sage who, when asked by a friend how to decide some difficult question, responded, 'Sleep upon it,' was a sage

of the first magnitude, an Aldebaran of aphorists. The soul of man has closer contact with the infinite Soul by night than by day. God touches us in dreams. The body is at rest; the hours are silent and sunless; it is a time when you have no companion but One. The older men grow (men who grow wiser with age), the more they appreciate sleep.

But even children learn more in sleep than at any other time. Why? The philosopher fashionable materialist will either deny the thesis, or say that the brain (a mere machine, which Messrs. Willcox and Gibbs could improve) works on unconsciously. I leave these neoteric wiseacres to their own devices. I am content to believe in God-since I know He is here with me, as I write alone, with no motion in the room save that of my goose-quill, and the flame of the wood fire. If I could for

the millionth division of a minute entertain the blind negativism of those who tell us we have no souls, that the universe is an accidental combination of atoms, that God is impossible, I should certainly hurry on that annihilation which they require us to expect. Suicide would be a duty in a world without a God.

When Charlie and Clara got silently to the island, they went at once, as if by instinct (for there was no previous agreement), to the oak tree. Look at them! Charlie swarms up the huge old oak as none but a born forester could do it. Thirty feet up, that first branch where Clara's rope is fastened; he lets it down to her, and she hangs on toughly, and in two minutes she is up in the heart of the mighty tree. It was a cosy little nook of a room there, where the first layer of boughs went out. Charlie used to keep all sorts of treasures in a hole in one

of the boughs, which served for a cupboard.

When they were up there together, those two, they felt the sort of isolated independence which children like above everything, and which with overgrown children is a passion. What sends one man up in a balloon . . . another man into the lion-haunted inland of Africa? The desire is to be alone to escape from newspapers, taxes, Mr. Gladstone, the Bank rate of discount, three-volume novels, the South Kensington Museum, and other nuisances.

Children have just the same dislike to their own special plagues—such as scolding aunts, the multiplication-table, soap and water, Dr. Watts, Miss Mangnall, Euclid, the Latin Grammar, the ubiquitous Colenso. Bishop Colenso entirely ruined his chance of being a fashionable hierarch when he published his detestable books on arithmetic and algebra. Nobody would accept his theology who had had to solve his equations.

To steal a cold plum-pudding and eat it up an apple tree is the English schoolboy's idea of Elysium. I confess to a very strong sympathy with the English schoolboy. There is the originality of the thing—the definite defiance of public opinion. And, by the way, here is an excellent opportunity for climbing an unnecessary tree like a schoolboy, and saying a word about "public opinion,"—with which phrase I often hear or see the "majority" connected.

Does it occur to any one who uses these inane expressions, reducible to absurdity by many different processes, that there is a direct cut to public opinion in its essential form, through the conscience of man? That a small borough in Gloucestershire sends to Parliament a person of what are supposed to be different opinions from his predecessor, is

a poor test of public opinion; nor indeed, if you get all the millions of China and India to vote on any of those tremendously important questions which fiercely fasten on the minds of men—such for example as the income tax, the malt-tax, the disestablishment of the Church of England, or of all conceivable churches, the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister, appointment of governors to gaols by ballot on the part of the prisoners—would you be quite sure that you had reached what is called public opinion?

Earth is one of the smaller planets of the solar system, and that system is quite a Liliput among astronomical arrangements. There are probably a million times as many people on the Sun as on the Earth, and each one of them a thousand times as big. What chance would a pigmy like the Claimant have in obtaining public opinion on his side in that central orb?

But there is a direct road to the highest form of public opinion. God, who is the Majority—since all the myriads of myriads of orbs and of beings He has created, are but a slight fraction of His Infinite Mind—has linked Himself with each of us. We call that telegraphic line conscience; our forefathers, who used better English, called it inwyt. Call it what you will, it is the small still voice of God to His children; and He who can hear it need not trouble himself about public opinion.

A council in the oak tree. A soft south wind was coming down the valley, and running a silvery ripple over the lazy lake. The great boughs of the tree swayed with it, and the children's parlour rocked . . . an aërial cradle.

'So we shall have to learn something from that ugly parson,' quoth Charlie ruefully, 'and all because I happened to tumble into the water. I wish he'd been somewhere else.'

'I don't,' said the girl. 'Where would you have been if he had? And I don't call him ugly, you know, Charlie. His hair is rather sandy; but if he put on some hair-oil I do believe it would curl a little, and he would brighten up wonderfully. And I really do like his nose; it is so straight and fine. And his eyes. What colour do you call his eyes?'

'Oh, hang his eyes!' exclaimed Charlie.

'Like you girls! as if any fellow ever knew the colour of any other fellow's eyes. All I can remember about them is that he squints horrid.'

'Charlie!' exclaimed Clara, pinching him severely.

'Well, he does. It's one of those squints that pretend to be all right. That fellow could look round a corner. What possessed us to listen to his blarney I can't think. If he wants to teach me anything he'll have to climb this oak tree to do it. I should like to see him at it.'

'Oh, Charlie, you are ungrateful,' said Clara, 'when he jumped into the lake after you, and all. It was so kind and so brave. And you can see he only wants to teach us something for our own good. I am sure I want to know lots of things.'

'I'm sure I don't. What should we want to know? He got over me with a long story about one thing and another; but I think we know quite as much as anybody need. However, we're in for it. I can see you fancy him, and Keziah fancies him, and he pulled me out of the water. I wish he'd tumbled in himself, instead.'

'You're very wicked, Charlie,' quoth Clara, with tears (the irresistible argument) in her eyes. 'Now do be good to him, for

I am so grateful to him for jumping in to save you, and I am sure we ought to be glad to learn things from him. I know I am awfully stupid.'

'You know a hawk from a heron,' said Charlie, unconsciously following Shakespeare, 'and a snipe from a moorhen, and a leveret from a rabbit, and a trout from a pike. What better is he going to teach you? However, I give in. Men always have to give in to women—and parsons. I wonder when he means to begin. You see, he said we could stop whenever we got tired, and that's a blessing.'

'But would that be fair?' said Clara. 'If he takes the trouble to teach us something, ought we to give up the minute we begin to be tired? I suppose he knows better than we do what we ought to learn, and so I think we ought to give him a chance.'

'I tell you what it is, Clarry,' quoth

Charlie, leaning back into his favourite fork of the oak, and stretching his young sinewy arms. 'We've made a mistake. You don't see it; perhaps you won't just yet, but it's true. That chap drew me on with his description of things he could teach us, till I quite thought it would be jolly fun; but when he said he meant to be master till we dismissed him, I didn't like it. I don't want a master.'

'But it only means you are to learn the lessons he gives you, and when you are tired you can stop.'

'I don't know,' said the boy thoughtfully, 'it mayn't be so easy. Suppose you want to stop and I don't, or I want to stop and you don't. We shouldn't like to make a row. However, we shall see. I dare say it's all right, Clara, but I never cared much about learning anything, and I hate parsons.'

It was with some uncertainty, as may be

supposed, that Charles and Clara confronted Mr. Eustace Theyre to receive their first lesson. But so pleasant and gossipy a piece of instruction it was, that they liked it exceedingly, and that mutinous Charlie looked forward with a feeling the opposite of disgust to their amateur tutor's next lecture. There was no particular grumbling on Charlie's part in the oak tree.



CHAPTER IV.

TWO GENTLEMEN AT VENICE.

But, lo, across the seas our way we wing, To the enchanted City of Romance, Set amid briny water, wandering

Through still canals, where traffic is a trance, And there is subtle silence in the air, And on St. Mark's the lingering sunbeams glance.

N a spacious room overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice, Tom Drax was waiting breakfast for his brother Jack. A pile of unopened and, indeed, unsorted letters lay before him. Through

Drax was perfectly happy, for he was

Tom

the open windows stole a pleasant air.

making himself uncomfortable to quarrel with his brother. Tom had taken to early rising, and he argued eloquently one day that no moment of the beautiful morning sunshine of Italy should be wasted. pointed to the rosy-fingered Aurora, drawing the fleecy curtains round the couch of old Tithonus, as that daily vision is seen across the lagunes. They were in the Square of Mark; they had been visiting an St. English friend, Blethin, Lord Brodspeare, a baron and a poet. Aurora's fingers seemed ruddier than usual, as they drew the immortal curtains. Perhaps it was Brodspeare's wine, always abundant; or his talk, always witty and poetic; any way, the brothers were more cantankerous than ever.

'One ought to rise early to see this sort of thing,' said Tom, pausing in delight, as the keen lances of sunrise seemed to wake into life the drowsy old lions of St. Mark.

'Rather, one ought to sit up late,' said Jack, 'as our experience proves. If we hadn't supped with Brodspeare, we should not be here, looking at the sunrise.'

'You will look at everything the wrong way.'

He would have been very much disappointed if his brother had looked at it in any other way.

Since that morning, the brothers had delightedly kept up their quarrel on this question of early or late. Tom took to early rising, Jack to the reverse thereof. The consequence was that they had not half so much of each other's company as usual, and therefore not half so many chances of controversy, and they were already growing tired of the business. It was always the

way. They grew tired of one theme of quarrel, and were thankful to forget it when a fresh one turned up.

Tom Drax, it has been said, was waiting breakfast for Jack, the letters from England lying unopened before him; this was to impress on his contumelious brother a sense of his own self-denial. Of course Jack took it quite the opposite way; in fact, when he did enter the room, he looked sleepy, and said:

- 'Good-morning, Tom. You might just as well have had breakfast and read your letters. I knew you'd do this sort of thing, so I got up at least an hour earlier than I intended.'
- 'My dear Jack, I got up an hour or two later than I intended, to suit your fancies. You know I am always ready to meet you half way. Never mind, old fellow, we won't quarrel. Let's have breakfast. Here's a heap of letters.'

There was a lovely quarrel concealed in one of those innocent envelopes, a quarrel to supersede the late-or-early question at once.

The letter in question was one of the last opened, and was addressed in a square, stout, almost defiant hand to Thomas Drax, Esq. It was clumsily sealed with a wafer. Tom Drax held it up unopened.

- 'Elegant epistle that, Jack,' said he.
 'Anybody can almost see old Radstock writing it, in that precious lumber-room he calls his study. Now I wonder what Radstock has to say.'
- 'Nothing good, I'll warrant. He never takes the trouble to write unless he can have the pleasure of telling bad news. I used to look upon him as a bird of ill omen when we were boys at Draxfell.'
- 'Faith, he was a kind-hearted old fellow. Don't you remember he always had his coatpockets full of apples?'

'Yes, and confoundedly sour they were. He used to pick out refuse French crabs, that would have given his pigs the colic, and tried to gammon us they were Ribstone pippins. But I wonder you don't open his letter, if you really expect good news from Radstock.'

Thus adjured, Tom Drax opened and read:

" Honoured Sir and Mr. John,

"This is to state that I went to Drax-fell—this day was a sen'night—to inquire after the health and comfort of the young lady and the young gentleman. Their health is excellent; but I took care to bring with me good store of rhubarb and senna to place in Mistress Gibbon's hands for their benefit. They grow fast, as, indeed, is the nature and custom of healthy children who have plentiful victuals. Mistress Gibbon

hath not forgot how to concoct a dainty dish; with some wild-fowl which I ate there was a most toothsome sauce, which, I fear, contained the extravagance of port wine . . ."'

'The old humbug,' interrupted Jack.
'He gets a devilish good dinner and then splits upon Keziah for giving him a glass of port in his sauce.'

'Well,' quoth Tom, 'I think our old port is rather wasted on sauce for a mallard for Radstock. But I suppose we shall never drink it.'

'Go on,' said Jack with a sigh.

"Mistress Gibbon informed me that the young lady and the young gentleman are at present receiving occasional instruction from a person who lodges in the village, and is supposed to be a priest of the Latin communion."

- 'Hallo!' cried the reader, interrupting himself this time; 'what's this?'
- 'Why it's Tim Radstock's good news,' said Jack. 'Go on. I want to hear more.'
- "They made acquaintance by accident, she said, and he is a very good and learned young man, and he thought it shame they did not receive instruction. Wherefore, having no special business, he teaches the young lady French and drawing, and the young gentleman Latin and the mathematics whenever they list. They like him greatly, and are obedient. I saw and spoke with him, and find him a modest and courteous person, although a priest of the Latin communion.
 - "I am,
 - "Honoured Sir, and Mr. John,
 "Yours humbly to command,
 "TIMOTHY RADSTOCK."

Tom Drax did not read this letter to the end. He threw it on the table with such energy that he smashed a finger-glass.

'Damn it!' he exclaimed; 'old Keziah must be mad to let a confounded Papist come and teach those children. It's a rascally Jesuit trick. What's best to be done, Jack?'

'I see no particular reason for doing anything,' his brother coolly replied. 'This young priest teaches the children something; that may do them good, and, at any rate, can't harm them; and I dare say he'll get tired of it soon enough, or be ordered off to his duties. I really think it's rather a fortunate thing for them. They'd have run as wild as a couple of young colts down there, with nobody to talk to but old Keziah.'

'And why shouldn't they run wild?' asked Tom Drax fiercely; 'they are young enough. Down on Draxmere they'll lay in a stock of health that'll last them for life. What should they learn anything for yet? and from a Popish priest, too. It won't do, Jack.'

These two brothers always talked of the children as if they were their joint property; just, in fact, as a father and mother would talk of their youngsters.

'I see no harm,' said John Drax. 'If Clara were older, a young priest might be dangerous; but she has not reached her teens yet, and the ladies of our family are not precocious. It's a mere accidental meeting, you can see; and I dare say these lessons keep the children from getting their feet wet in the mere, and a lot of other mischief.'

'I won't have it,' said Thomas Drax resolutely. 'I'm not going to let Clara be turned into a Roman Catholic by some insinuating young Jesuit. They're all a bad lot, I swear.'

- 'Why, it was only last night,' said the provoking Jack, 'that you and Cardinal Filocopi, over that champagne-punch with arrack and green tea that Brodspeare made such a fuss about, agreed that Protestantism is a mistake, and that the Catholic priesthood are frightfully maligned.'
- 'Blethin's punch was infamously strong,' said Tom Drax, laughing; 'and Filocopi is a most insinuating villain. Now I verily believe, Filocopi has sent that young Jesuit to Draxfell to entrap those children.'
 - 'Tom!'
- 'Fact, my boy. It's a plot. They think we're awfully rich, because we spend money freely; they hear us talk frankly enough about Draxfell and the youngsters; they fancy something may be gained by sending a young seminarist down there. I see it clearly!'
 - 'All nonsense,' curtly retorted Jack, 'now,

as you and I sometimes differ in opinion, let's try an experiment in this particular case. Can't we ask the Cardinal some sudden question that will test his knowledge?

'Do you expect to take a Cardinal by surprise? My dear Jack! you would just as soon get a blush from a statue of Venus. He's a machine, like all other priests—or rather a part of a machine, which works in every corner of Christendom; and there's another part at work down at Draxfell, trying to influence those children; and the whole thing is worked from the Vatican. I know all about it.'

How many arguments those two brothers had over the subject-matter of Mr. Timothy Radstock's letter, it is impossible to say. They quarrelled over it longer than quarrel between them had ever lasted before; they gave a bitter-sweet flavour to all their meals with it, they discussed the question with

Lord Brodspeare, and tried vainly to obtain information from Cardinal Filocopi, who of course was absolutely mystified. But they did not do the only sensible thing—go to Draxfell and look after their children.

No. They fought over the question till they grew tired of it. And at about the same time, they grew tired of Venice. Where should they go next? This question made them forget their former controversy. Common sense would have said England, to Draxfell. This never occurred to them. Each had his hobby.

'Iceland,' said Tom. 'It will be pleasantly cool after this. Then there are the geysers—hot water to any extent. The language is poetic, and the maidens are pretty. It is the *Ultima Thule* of that scoundrel Seneca. Let's go there.'

'My idea,' said Jack, in reply, 'is Polynesia. There you see primitive life in its

simplest form. There humanity is amphibious. As I understand, there is no money, and very little clothes, and nobody has ever written an epic poem—whereas that monstrosity has been committed in Iceland.'

'We'll play three games of chess to decide,' said Tom. 'Muzio or Allgaier—none of your close games. What do you say?'

'I say, yes. After dinner to-night. Let the loser decide where to go.'

'Why?'

'Because you know we, both of us, want not to have to decide.'

'Agreed,' said Tom.

So, after dining quietly alone, they sat in a corner of a great picture gallery, with a passionless, subtle portrait of a doge looking down upon them, and the moonlight through the window so bright that the lamp burnt dim, and began their game of chess. It was a Muzio, Tom having first move; he had only just castled, leaving his knight at Jack's mercy, when a servant announced Lord Brodspeare. He came gaily into the light through the dusky gallery, and looked at the two brothers with a sarcastic smile.

'Chess, eh? Mimic battles while the battle of life has to be fought! Still, these ivory baubles have had their interest. Men have played chess for life—for their wives; there's a legend of one fellow who played chess with Satan for his soul. Ha, ha! He drew the game. I've got the position somewhere in an old book of Carrera's.'

A man of five feet nine, perfect in form, with short, crisp, light hair, all over curls, dark blue eyes under long lashes, a Greek nose, a mouth all over movement of fun, yet occasionally very firm, no hair on the face save a moustache, hands and feet very small. Lord Brodspeare's hands were a picture; rosy in the nails and palms—delicately nervous.

The skilled cheirognomist could learn a lesson from that small strong hand.

'Our game is no joke,' said Jack Drax.
'It is to decide where we shall go next—
Iceland or the Polynesian Islands. The loser chooses.'

'Are you tired of Venice then? Tired of the only city that is circled by the sea? I am not. There is more adventure ripe in Venice yet. You must not go. Come—send for a flask of wine, and let us talk. There is a fellow in a gondola below there, singing—just like a bird that sings to his mate among the leaves of spring. What is it he sings?'

Brodspeare went out on the balcony to listen. The wine was ordered. The game stood still. The tenor notes of the gondolier came up through the still sweet air.

'Once I have loved—O never again!
It was such pleasure—it was such pain—
And the maid so witty, and I such a dunce;

In shadow and light of the dim lagune,
O, but she sang so mellow a tune,
Once—once!

'Twice to love—O, it cannot be!
Yet there on the terrace what do I see?
It would melt my heart, if 'twere made of ice.
Shadow of eyelash, light of eye—
Faith, I must do my duty, I—
Twice—twice!'

'That fellow sings remarkably well,' said Lord Brodspeare, turning back into the room, and pouring into a Venice goblet a draught of wine. 'His moral, though not universally accepted, is accurate, I think. If a man loves once, he will probably love twice. The difficulty is to begin.'

'A difficulty you never found,' said Tom Drax.

'Ah, there you are very wrong. If I had ever loved a woman, I should not have written so much about love. Half the people who write and talk of love, have

never felt it. I have never felt it, I swear; and my love-poems are thought perfect. I never saw the woman I could love. Indeed, I sometimes doubt whether the love-passion of literature exists at all, in fact.'

'And yet,' said Jack Drax, 'all the world regards you as the most passionate of lovers.'

'I act the part,' said Brodspeare. 'I play Romeo over again. Was Shakespeare in love with the woman older than himself to whom he left his second-best bed? For myself, I understand two feelings toward my fellow-creatures, friendship and hatred But love? No—emphatically no! I have two or three true friends, and two or three true enemies. But there is not a woman among them, nor is there a woman in the world I care for. There is no such thing as love; in my life it is a blank. Women have loved me—or pretended to love me—but I have

never yet seen the woman I could love.'

- 'You have no imagination,' said Tom Drax indignantly.
- 'He has too much imagination,' said Jack Drax controversially.
- 'Have you got a cigar?' asked Lord Brodspeare.

Tom Drax went to a cabinet, and found a box of choice cigars, which he placed by the poet. Brodspeare puffed vigorously. A cool and pleasant air came in through the open windows. There was silence awhile.

'You were playing chess,' said Brodspeare presently. 'I have interrupted you, which is too bad, as I am as dull as a catalogue. Won't you go on? I'll be spectator ab extra. I am well qualified, for I don't know the moves.'

'We were beginning a game to see where we should go next,' said Jack. 'We are vol. 1.

tired of Venice, and we are tired of each other; but we must go somewhere, that's certain. It's between Iceland and the South Seas.'

'Well,' said Lord Brodspeare, 'I consider that too bad. What do you mean by running away from Venice just as we are getting to find out each other's weak points, and shake down into something like friendship? It is intolerable. However, play out your game. I will sit and smoke. Now immerse yourselves in your battle. I am silent.'

The Drax brothers did as they were told.

They presently broke into controversy over the game.

'At it again!' said Lord Brodspeare.
'You'll never reach either Iceland or Polynesia at this rate. You had better throw down those ivory playthings and listen to me. I've something to tell you which may keep you in Venice.'

- 'What is it?' they both exclaimed.
- 'A lady,' said Lord Brodspeare.
- 'Woman pleases me not,' said Tom Drax.
- 'Who is she?' asked John Drax, more with a desire to differ from his brother than to know anything about her.
- 'A widow: young, pretty, and rich. She gives a soirée to-night, or a séance, or a sederunt, or a something of that sort, and I am going. Shall I take you? I am free of the house.'
 - 'I'm ready to go,' said Jack.
- 'Shall we see spirits and ghosts, and that sort of thing?' said Tom Drax.
- 'Any amount of them,' said Lord Brodspeare, 'so long as you pretend to believe in them. But the spirits are not obliging to what they call sceptics. You can talk with the ghost of your grandmother if you like. By the way, Tom, you might ask the spirits

who sent the Popish parson to teach the children.'

'But it might be a Jesuit spirit,' suggested Tom. 'Well, I suppose we may as well see the fun,' he continued, 'but I don't think that a woman who believes in such rubbish will have much charm for me.'

'Don't boast,' said Lord Brodspeare; 'wait till you see her, she is irresistible.'

'Then why don't you fall in love with her yourself?' said Tom Drax.

'Because I tell you I cannot fall in love. There is no love in my composition. I shall die a solitary bachelor, the last of my race, and Blethin will go to that priggish, canting cousin of mine, who'll be sure to marry some respectable woman with a respectable fortune, and bring up a dozen respectable children.'

'There's sentimental nonsense, from a man who has entry to the house of a young and

: .

charming widow,' said Jack. 'Get married, and you'll soon be cured of such nonsense.'

'Will you set me the example?' said Lord Brodspeare.

'Willingly,' answered Jack. 'I am only waiting for Tom; he could not get on without me, you know.'

'Nonsense,' said Tom. 'Get married as soon as you like, and go and take care of Draxfell and the children. I can come to see you when I'm hard up for somebody to quarrel with. But I'm not in the mind to marry.'

'Don't be in a hurry to make up your mind on that point, as I said before,' said Lord Brodspeare. 'Wait till you have seen the fair widow. Come, it's almost time we went. My gondolier waits.'

'Well,' said Jack Drax, 'we shan't finish this game of chess to-night, manifestly. It will have to be deferred.' Con the esconsissed at solything at night.

You may hear me say some not things, for I want you to see the fun. I may have to sell some less said Lord Browspears.

Truth would sugge me mane, from those imaginative line, said from Draw.

Thank you, said Brokspeace. If the destroy I shall begin to think myself the page of the period. Only that there never the page of the period, and that every there who can write prestly that were sees up for being the page of some other period. What are niner times to us! If a man has real page to family let him use it on his own time. It is wanted. Mere formal pagery is a man-take. Why the devil can't people live a postic life—a life whose movement is music!

"And why the devil should you introduce the devil into your argument? said Jack "I for one, as Mr. Gladstone would not believe in a personal devil. If there is such an individual, he is merely the leader of the opposition. That is intelligible. I can conceive that even the Creator of the universe would be glad to meet with some one who did not entirely agree with Him. Contradiction is a wholesome tonic, and without it there is no effery escence.'

They descended the marble stairs together, and stepped into Lord Brodspeare's gondola. A bright light burnt in its snug little cabin, and books and manuscripts, and wine and fruit lay in admired confusion everywhere. There was a full-moon on the still dim water; the oars of the gondolier seems to dash flakes of fire out of the canal.

'You have not told us this mysterious creature's name, Brodspeare,' said Tom Drax, 'or by what right we invade her to-night in this abrupt way. Is not that rather cool of us?'

^{&#}x27;She expects you,' was the answer. 'She

is about twenty-five, I should guess; tall, active, handsome, rather like a deer, in fact; a widow; intolerably rich, very clever, and decidedly mad. Her name is Adela Courtenay. That is my brief sketch of her.'

They reached the steps of a brilliantlylighted palace, where there was a general stir in all the rooms, and sound of sweet music. They ascended. The saloons, though large, were well-peopled, yet without semblance of a crowd. English and Italian faces and costumes mingled in picturesque contrast. The hostess, clad wholly in flowing robes of white, her beautiful arms bare, a circlet of perfect pearls on her neck and bosom, a wreath of dark purple flowers on her flaxen hair, which fell loosely over her shoulders, was the most noticeable figure in the rooms. Her eyes, which had a fitful, changeful colour, though they had a dreamy look, somehow or other caught the glances of all who entered;

she saw Lord Brodspeare and his two companions on the instant; all three knew it though she did not seem to look at them. It was a kind of electric recognition.

The air was full of music. A superb pianist, with two right hands, was playing a staccato accompaniment to a song which was being sung by a young tenor-singer who hoped soon to change his mellow notes for English gold. His lyric ran thus:

'She loved me only a day or two:

Ah, she never had time for more!

Princes crowded my Sweet to woo;

Flowers were rained at her chamber door.

She had just a word and a kiss for me,

Then away she danced in her gay girl-glee,

Quite fancy-free.

'I love her always—a vanished dream,
Passed away like a falling star:
Those sweet hours of a joy supreme,
Shine through the mists of time afar.
Never again am I quite alone,
Since the dew of her lips I once have known,
Since she was my own.'

The singer drew out the last notes into a sort of agonised pathos, and the pianist rained upon them a shower of Mendelssohn-like sorrow as Lord Brodspeare and the Drax brothers passed up the saloon toward Mrs. Courtenay. That lady was prepared for the strangers. She had noted them on the instant of ingress.

Lord Brodspeare apologised in courtly fashion for bringing his friends. Mrs. Courtenay was most gracious. They were soon quite at home, and the evening passed right pleasantly; but of the mystical business described by Lord Brodspeare there was none. It was simply a very charming reception, with music and dancing, and flirtation in abundance.

I believe the last person who left the palace was the poet-peer. He took leave of Mrs. Courtenay in a half-cynical, half-affectionate way.

'You have been very delightful to-night,'

he said. 'See, the sun is putting out your lamps, just as the great movement of the human race destroys individuals. Are you tired? You will sleep as if you had drank mandragora. Do you like my widowers?'

'They are most eccentric,' she said; 'quite a study; I must see more of them.'

'I want to keep them here—they are so amusing; but they talk of travelling, each in a different way. Magnetise them, Adela. They are quite marriageable men.'

'Thank you, Blethin. I don't particularly care about marriageable men. I think the unmarriageable men are the pleasantest.'



CHAPTER V.

ADELA COURTENAY.

Strange visions of beauty have been noted there— Portia and Jessica both knew that city. Byron had drunken its delicious air.

BOUT Mrs. Courtenay there was really no mystery at all, though she liked to assume some, and though her career had been a curious one. The name by which she was first known to

the world was Mary Zeal; and she was born at Zeal-Monachorum, in the county of Devon. Her father, Tom Zeal, brought up as a carpenter, was cursed with a remarkable me-

chanical genius and a great love of change, and the little village was by no means astonished when he vanished from its midst one day, after drinking much cider with his cronies, and telling them that he did not mean to come back till he had made his fortune.

Those who had known him were not much surprised when he returned years after to the village, with his daughter Mary, twelve years old. Although he had not made his fortune, he had brought back with him about fifty pounds, which proved more than enough to keep him for the rest of his life, for he was rapidly dying of consumption.

He would never say a word to any one about his marriage, and Mary had forgotten her mother, who must have died when she was quite young; but she had her miniature on ivory in a gold locket set with diamonds, which she wore on a chain round her neck.

It was evident to the villagers that Tom Zeal must have married some great lady. It was evident to Miss Digby, the parson's daughter, a lady of thirty, who investigated all the minor mysteries that became apparent in that quiet Devon parish. But, though a marvellous cross-examiner, she could extract nothing from Tom Zeal, who had sunk into that obstinate lethargy which weighs down the spirits of some men when they are slowly moving toward death.

Miss Kate Digby was disappointed, but she took such a fancy to pretty Mary Zeal that she resolved to bring her up as a kind of confidential maid for herself. Miss Digby had a weak father, a nice little fortune in her own right, and an intense desire for educating and managing and improving other people. When Tom Zeal died, without telling the mysterious story of his marriage, Miss Digby took possession of Mary. The child was to

be her attendant, her pupil, her humble companion.

As years went on, Miss Digby was not altogether satisfied with her bargain. Mary Zeal grew up to be very beautiful, with a unique beauty of contrast not often seen in English villages, and which probably came from her mixed parentage. Then she had an agile rapid brain, and so easily mastered problems in algebra and passages in Horace that had given many hours' work to Miss Digby, who had only a painful desire to be blue. But Mary all the while was docile, humble, obedient, and Miss Digby found it impossible to take offence at any of her actions. Perhaps she was almost too demure for such a pretty clever girl.

The attention of Mary's patroness was diverted from her for awhile by the acquaintance of a gentleman who was quite the handsomest man and best dancer at the county

ball at Exeter. When they had waltzed into that happy intimacy which naturally comes of arms round waists and forms in close contact, it appeared that the Rev. Mr. Digby, third wrangler of his year, had been Mr. Courtenay's tutor at St. John's College. Mr. Courtenay had nothing to do: there was good shooting at Zeal-Monachorum. course he went to stay at the parsonage. Kate Digby hoped her time was come at He had money, and so had she: they were about the same age: it would suit her perfectly. I fear she made Mr. Courtenay almost too comfortable. This is a great mistake to which kind-hearted girls with a wholesome disposition for marriage are prone. A lady should make her lover very uncomfortable before marriage, and very comfortable after.

Mary Zeal was on her best behaviour while Mr. Courtenay stayed in the house.

She was shy and demure, and kept out of his way as much as possible, thereby winning her mistress's approval. Miss Digby, having quite decided that now had come the time to make her great move, saw clearly that it would not do to let her lover's attention be diverted by a pretty servant-girl. Of course Kate did not for a moment think Mary prettier than herself, but she admitted that Mary's was a prettiness that might more readily strike the casual observer.

But men are 'kittle cattle to drive,' as the Scottish adage hath it: and Mr. Arthur Courtenay had all his life preferred his own way to other people's. He had keen eyes; he saw beautiful Mary Zeal playing the humble handmaiden to commonplace Kate Digby, with long-lashed eyelids drooping modestly over eyes that looked as if they could talk but would not; he saw moreover

that she kept carefully out of his way, evading and eluding him as much as possible.

Ungrateful monster! When Kate Digby handed him his coffee after dinner, he was attracted by the tall light-haired girl who brought in the tray. Mary Zeal, whom the villagers of Zeal-Monachorum had set down as 'a queer-looking zart o' young 'oman,' was to Arthur Courtenay a marvellous vision of unique beauty. Nothing might have come of all this but for an untoward accident: Miss Digby caught a very severe cold, and her face swelled so badly that she did not venture to appear in public. As Mr. Digby lived in his study, and never ate his meals unless there was some one to remind him of that duty, Arthur Courtenay was for about two days and a half left to his own resources. It naturally occurred to him to look after Mary Zeal. I am afraid that young person, now that Miss Digby was safe out of the

way, did not evade and elude so pertinaciously as before. She permitted herself to be caught, at any rate: and it was in a very quiet part of the grounds, where she was trying to find a few early violets for her mistress's table. What confabulation took place between her and Arthur Courtenay I cannot say: but the lamentable fact is, that when Miss Digby was well enough to come downstairs, she had neither maid to dress her nor lover to caress her.

Mr. and Mrs. Courtenay were on their wedding tour.

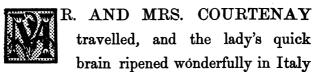


CHAPTER VI.

A WIDOW'S CAREER.

'Beware o' widders!'

TONY WELLER.



and France. Moreover, her husband was a man of unusual ability, and aided her development. He was a brilliant, gay, easy-going man, with no insight into character; he thought his beautiful wife perfect, and he liked to be petted and waited on; and she

caressed him and fondled him in the pleasantest way. He knew all manner of wanderers abroad, the Bohemian aristocracy, and he was specially an admirer of Blethin, Lord Brodspeare. Him he followed everywhere loyally, was one of his train through many Italian cities, swore by his poetry, aided him in his intrigues, and would have paid his debts if he had had money enough and Brodspeare would have let him.

The poet seemed even fonder of Courtenay after his marriage than before. He took Adela (Mary had discovered this was her second name) in hand as a pupil, and taught her I know not what. Brodspeare was famous as a tutor of female youth. Whether Mrs. Trimmer would have approved him in that position is doubtful.

It was about two years before the meeting with the Drax brothers at Venice that Courtenay caught a low fever at Rome, and

the idiotic Italian chirurgeon bled him to death. He got wet snipe-shooting in the Pontine Marshes, and came home chilled through, and never recovered. Adela nursed him kindly, but, unluckily, had not the nous to prevent the doctors from putting him on starvation diet. Brodspeare was not in Rome at the time, and only arrived a day after his friend's death, and his fierce indignation frightened the stupid fellow who had killed Arthur Courtenay.

'One bottle of brandy, you frightful fool,' he said to the principal physician, a most sagacious Sangrado in the severest costume, 'would have saved that man's life. You will go straight to hell with his death upon your miserable soul.'

That physician went and got absolution immediately.

Mrs. Courtenay was in great grief for a short time; but hers was not a temperament

to which sorrow clung closely, and she was soon as gay again as a butterfly whose wings have just been slightly watered by a Mayday shower. Her situation in life was not altogether uncomfortable. Young, rich (for Courtenay left her his estate), beautiful, clever, in good society, and possessing that perfect independence which is the privilege of widowhood, Adela Courtenay had advantages that Tom Zeal's daughter could not have expected. She fully understood them, and made up her mind to enjoy life and drink her fill of pleasure. Women of this class have no idea of happiness.

The sole thing that annoyed Adela Courtenay was that Lord Brodspeare seemed in some inexplicable way to magnetise her. He paid her little attention. He just pleasantly flattered and teased and catechised her, as was his habit with pretty clever girls. Brodspeare had the reputation in England of being

the wickedest man going, and was wont to say he was glad of it, since it made people buy his books; but he was really a man reasonably virtuous, only with a faculty of flirtation, and with such personal vigour and poetic freshness, that women could not help liking him.

Adela Courtenay was quite vexed with herself. Wherever Brodspeare went—and he was always flying off on a parabola, like a comet—she could not help going. Women were not alone in this. Brodspeare had a following of men also, who were always with him when their wives and their affairs would allow it. He had that magnetic power which we see in successful leaders of men, like Cæsar, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Gladstone; but having no mind to exert it—for he preferred isolation, and to think his own thoughts, and dream his own dreams—he alienated the less enthusiastic

of his followers by his tyrannical treatment.

There were some he could not drive away. Adela Courtenay was one. She was madly desirous to be quite independent, yet she could not resist Brodspeare's mysterious fascination. She hated him—at least she tried to persuade herself she hated him—yet she was miserable unless she was near him, and dared not disobey his lightest wish or whim.

This greatly interfered with the career she had decided on when she achieved the supreme independence of widowhood. She did not want to marry Brodspeare, and she knew well enough, if Brodspeare married anybody, it would not be her; yet she could not resist this man's magnetism. She felt like some thin needle of steel, irresistibly fated to follow the loadstone.

Brodspeare had been at Venice some

months before Mrs. Courtenay came thither. An imperious summons reached her from her solicitors to come to London, as they had been served with a notice that her late husband's will was to be disputed. Adela was frightened—law frightens ladies more easily than anything—and terror seized her of what would be her fate if she lost all her money, and had to earn a living in some way or other. So she got back to England as fast as possible, was too anxious to be sea-sick when she crossed the Channel, and arrived in London to find that she need not have come, and that the threat of a lawsuit was merely a feint of a scoundrel cousin of Courtenay's, who fancied that she might be terrified into paying him something.

Well, as it happened to be the height of a very gay season, Mrs. Courtenay resolved to see a little London life. Courtenay had a quiet house of his own in Upper Ten Street,

Mayfair—a small house niched between two vast mansions, and far cosier than either of them. Its history was curious. These mansions had been built by two great architects for two great patricians . . . in days when it was never guessed they would eventually be in a street. One was Italian, and the other Elizabethan; and each architect had done his utmost for his favourite style.

Now there lay between the sites of these two great houses a narrow strip of land which belonged to another owner; and there was then in London a third architect, by no means famous or fortunate, for he held the crotchet that in a building there was no beauty which does not naturally grow out of the usefulness of the building. This absurd gentleman was as much out of place in the profession of architecture as in other vocations would be a poet who maintained that sense was more important than rhyme, or a politician who

placed the interests of the people higher than the ambition of his leader. But Mr. Packe, though an unsuccessful architect, could sometimes see what other folk did not see. He at any rate foresaw that the two mansions would some day be in a street, and that the narrow strip of land would be valuable.... so he took time by the forelock, and bought that strip of land, and was wont to walk of a summer's morning towards the Park, and watch the growing work of his more fortunate rivals, and plan the sort of house he would wedge in between, on that long narrow strip of ground.

Now the great architects, in their desire to outdo each other, had overlooked this same strip; indeed, I believe that each thought it belonged to the other property. Not till they came to the end of their business did anything occur to them about it: but when. rubbish had to be carted off, and the pre-

cincts of the edifices brought into order, inquiry was made, and it was discovered that this bit of land was Mr. Packe's freehold. Both architects were in consternation. Only too well they knew the unsuccessful Packe, who was wont to write biting pamphlets to show that their masterworks were failures. Insidious overtures were made to him to sell; he might have got ten times what he gave for his land, but he would not hear of it. He waited his time.

When an earl was giving great entertainments in the Italian house, and a prince-merchant in the Elizabethan house, Packe's scaffolding began to run up between them. It was a nuisance: but a man may do what he likes on his own freehold. Now, although the frontage of Packe's land was narrow, it extended backward a long way, and, after many speculations as to what he should build, he decided on a miniature mansion

entre cour et jardin, after the fashion of the French aristocracy. He built up, level with the first-floor of his two neighbours, a wall of Portland stone, with quaint ornamentation, with an arched gateway just wide enough for a carriage to enter. The yard behind this was lined with miniature offices of one story. There was room for a carriage to turn. The house turned its back to this yard; it began just where the neighbouring mansions ended; it ran to just their height, and had windows on each side overlooking their gardens. It was built in a fantastic style, with airy balconies and embayed lights. A passage ran right through it, so that on the ground-floor there were rooms on each side, narrow but lofty. first-floor was all one room, with just a couple of small antercoms on the landing: the two floors above were arranged too variously for my description. The real front

of the house looked on a garden behind, with a fountain in the centre: Packe, who was a botanist as well as an archæologist, lined the walls with flowering shrubs of fragrant odour. There was a door in the garden-wall to the lane behind. By running up his house at the rear of his magnificent neighbours, the eccentric architect secured free air and a pleasant view over their carefully-kept gardens.

Such is the history of Packe's house in Upper Ten Street, still one of the curiosities of London. That history is so imperfectly known, that in Mr. Courtenay's time it was called Pax House, and people thought it Latin. Packe's daughter, who had a good fortune (for the erratic architect suddenly blossomed into prosperity, partly by reason of this very house), married a Courtenay. Hence Adela became owner of the famous house.

She liked it. She liked everything irre-This house was deligular and eccentric. cious, and she made up her mind that some day it should be the most exclusive and magnetic house in London. And this of necessity brought her back to think of Brodspeare. If she could get him there, who would not follow? He was just then the spoilt child of England—the country of spoilt children . . . some by neglect and some by over-petting, and most of them by a cruel mixture of both. That Brodspeare had said he would never set foot in England again did not matter to Adela Courtenay. made up her mind that he should, and she promptly went in search of him.

She left England, and appeared in Venice.



CHAPTER VII.

EDUCATION.

'Nature never doth betray The heart that loves her.'

IMPLICIUS LAXMAN wrote excellent advice to Eustace Theyre, and the young priest obeyed orders.

Gradually he conquered, and indeed caused entire forgetfulness of the mysterious yet natural instinct which had induced the children at first to dislike him. They became the most docile of pupils. And now arose Eustace Theyre's great difficulty. He knew a few things well. He did not know, well or vol. 1.

ill, the very things that Charlie and Clara wanted. This is too often the case between tutor and pupil.

The great names of antiquity represent That they represented facts once is beyond doubt. Troy was: fuit Iliam. allow that city and its story to vanish would be to take from every poetic thinker his eldest child. Homer existed. The mighty rhapsodist, as Walter Landor held, knew the heroes of Troy and outlived most of them, and died upon a mountain-peak in Ithaca. But, if we choose to give up as indefensible all the narrative of Homer, there is just a In the 'Iliad' there is the epic little left. idea: in the 'Odyssey' there is the romantic idea: and in both there is the most marvellous musical metre the world has ever known. Why Poetry sprang into life like Athene, when Homer used the hexameter. absolute music. Still there was no Homer, according to the modern criticaster, finite lover of finitude: the great epics are merely scraps of old ballads, cleverly edited by some Athenian man of letters in the days of Pisistratus. Pshaw! 'If there were no God, you would have to invent one,' said some wicked wit: and the same is true of Homer.

Other great names, representing ideas, come to us through the twilight of the past. One is Æsop; another, Euclid. That modern investigators have given Æsop's 'Fables' to Babrius, and Euclid's 'Geometry' to Eudoxus, matters not to me. Those names I accept as indicating great ideas—ideas which may at any moment change the face of the world.

Now, the spirit of Æsop possessed Charlie, while the spirit of Euclid always talked to Clara. Their tutor knew nothing of either. He could neither perceive the cissoid curve in ivy, nor the voices of birds and other living creatures. He had one idea—the Catholic

Church, and the duty of all Catholics to reclaim heretical souls. Hence, while he and his pupils got on together remarkably well in general knowledge, there were points at which they quite failed to understand each other. They learnt much from Eustace Theyre, and did his bidding, and loved him well; yet, after all, they were two asymptotes to a sacerdotal hyperbola. Their straight clear impulse could never touch his curve, though there was continuous approximation.

Whence got they those definite impulses, different altogether from what had been the ruling passion of the Drax family? Not from the Drax brothers, clearly, did the Drax cousins inherit such intangible trifles. Tom and Jack had no primary theory; they were equally blind to the Zoic speech of Æsop and the rigid reason of Euclid. Tutors can teach only what they know, not always that. It was clear that Charlie and Clara did not

get their scraps of originality from their sires, who never troubled themselves about the questions that were the very breath of life to the children. So, though it was not quite credible at first sight, it would seem that Euclid's sagacious ghost haunted the isle of the Channel, and that Æsop's spiritvoice was heard by the shallow rush of Kent river. The Norman Lily and the Danish Susan (accidental synonyms) were answerable for their children's idiosyncrasies. Brock must have had some intuitive love of law: Susan Braithwaite some intuitive love of life. Clara and Charlie inherited these tendencies, unconscious, perchance, in the breasts of their earlier owners, and developed them in such a way as to amaze and perplex those who had no similar faculties. Clara anticipated Henslow's law of phyllotaxis in her observation of the forms assumed by the foliage of the three great trees—the chestnut,

the cedar, the oak. Charlie talked to those trees, and got answers from them, and was as familiar with their inmost souls as Rhaicos with his Hamadryad.

Those trees, three in number, of unrivalled majesty all around Draxmere, were a world to these children. They neutralised Eustace Theyre's magnetism, which both felt very strong, which Clara convulsed herself in striving to resist. For, though they both liked their instructor, they both felt his influence over them too strong—unpleasantly strong, in fact. No healthy will approves submission to another will, except only the will of God. The rebellion of haughty children is based on a healthy instinct of free will.

Charlie had christened those trees. He gave them historic names, be sure. The great Spanish Chestnut was Roland . . . Roland, whose horn of ivory sounded so ter-

ribly after the Pyrenean battle that birds fell dead in the air. In the old Draxfell library, in quaint russia-bound books, Charlie had picked up legends, and had found Roland among them. O that he could have wielded Durandal and slain the Pagans! Yes, the Chestnut was Roland. The hero was transmuted to a tree.

The Cedar was Solomon. Not the Solomon of Scripture only, but the Solomon who sealed down genii in bottles, to escape centuries after and frighten fishermen into fits—the Solomon whose miraculous carpet carried him from place to place with all his court, while the innumerable birds of the air cooled him with winnowing wings—the Solomon whose glory, and power, and wisdom, and luxury were unrivalled. The Cedar was the mighty Hebrew king, so Charlie decreed.

The Oak was greater than Roland, greater than Solomon. Charlie's agile fancy made

the Oak an Englishman-Alfred, the king. and poet, and statesman, and soldier who, a thousand years ago created England. Somehow, young Charlie had the historic faculty. and could understand a great character when he saw it marvellously ill portrayed. He caught hold of Alfred the king, and clung to him. The Oak was Alfred. The strong defiant tree that held earth with nervous roots and threw up a myriad of merry branches to the winds of heaven was English all over. Every acorn might build a ship, and every ship would mean strength upon the sea. Thus thought Charlie, and he went back to Alfred, whose memory was a power in his brain; and as he roosted high in that oak on windy days, its creaking branches seemed to have human speech. A most ancient tree; what if it had grown from its acorn in Alfred's time, a thousand years ago? What if Alfred himself had seen the sapling

—ay, or even planted it? Not impossible, since Alfred was known to have done great deeds in the neighbourhood.

The education which Charlie and Clara got from Dame Nature, who has kept school in her own homely style for many centuries, was more potent than that which they received from the priest. And in truth, Nature's education outdoes that of all universities; but then, she will only take trouble with her favourite scholars. To the dunce in Nature's school there is no 'glory in the grass,' no meaning in bird-music, no mystery in the wind's whisper to the trees, no city in the sunset sky. How many men, though at every turn there is a picture no artist can ever equal, prefer a picture on canvas on their walls to the loveliness which, lying before them, they cannot see! Nature, everywhere and always full of motherly love, while you, full of stocks and shares, of politics or theology, are plodding away to your dreary work in London, kisses you with the fragrant dew from a white lilac spray, thereby tempting you to think. You do think—that your respectable, well-brushed hat is ruined for the City.

'Look at that old water-rat!' whispered Charlie to Clara, as on the verge of the island they watch the trout leaping in the lake. The May-fly is flashing to and fro, and the wily old trout are indulging their Epicurean tendencies. The trout is the Horace of fish.

That water-rat was sitting on his haunches on a green tuft of grass, carefully arranging his whiskers with his fore-paws, and looking ridiculously like an elderly member of Brooks's. Charlie watched him with wistful attention. He wanted to talk to him—he thought that water-rat must have picked up strange histories during his sojourn on the lake. This old grey fellow, pruning his whiskers with

curious gravity, looked highly venerable. He might have been a whig earl.

'That rat ought to have a mouse for a valet,' said Charlie at last to Clara, who had been watching him through luminous blue eyes while he was watching the rat. 'I wonder how old he is?

Clara had been waiting for Charlie to speak, before she threw a stone, already prepared, at the dignified rat. She did so now; but it fell far short, making a series of circles, each larger and each weaker than the last, in the quiet mere. Their gradual movement reached the reedy margin, but the sage old rat had dived at the very first splash.

'Why did you frighten the old fellow, Clara?' said Charlie as the stone splashed.

'Oh, but look at those beautiful rings in the water, all even, dying lower and lower! How wonderful it is!'

Thus said Clara, and the children talked

to their instructor about it, and he sent a précis of their talk, wherein it was entirely divested of its natural poetry, to Father Laxman. That ecclesiastic smiled at the simple, subtle record. After dinner he wrote a reply, from which very brief extract is required:

'Eustace, the duty of a Catholic priest, whatever circumstances occur, even if he cannot see the reason of his superior's orders—even if his nearest kin and dearest friends are sufferers—is to give to the Holy Church implicit obedience.

'The two children, whom you are now instructing, as is evident from your report, which gives an interesting account of their scarcely educated tendencies, require each a special treatment.

"I recommend you, as the boy has insight into animal and vegetable life, while the girl is curiously interested in the geometric forms of things, to read with the girl Euclid, and with the boy Phædrus.

'SIMPLICIUS 4.'

Probably Simplicius Laxman was in a humorous mood when he wrote this advice -easy enough for him, with a faculty for omniscience, and a magnetic influence over others, and the wondrous power of being all things to all men, to direct the education of two neglected eccentric children; but Eustace Theyre had none of these faculties, and was baffled by eccentricity, and had but one idea—the conversion of these young heretics to the Church of Rome. So, while he obediently followed the directions of his superior, he did very little good. Charlie mastered his Latin grammar fast enough, and hailed Phædrus with delight; but when he read the fables, he twisted and turned them into irregular forms that astonished his tutor.

The whole thing was a real romance to Charlie, an epic of the beasts.

'I think,' he said to his tutor, 'that wise old wolf was quite right to eat that silly little lamb that came and drank out of the same brook. Don't you?'

'He was a very wicked wolf,' said Clara, who always listened to Charlie's construing.

'Not a bit of it,' said the boy. 'He was a wolf of the world. Just see how he got out of paying a fee to Dr. Crane, when he got a bone out of his throat. Oh, I like that wolf!'

'This is very wild talk,' said the grave tutor mildly. 'Suppose we proceed with the construing.'

'Oh, but you know, Mr. Theyre, these stories must be all true, and I like to think about them. Only fancy that wise old fox that couldn't get at the grapes, and decided

they were sour. By Jove, he was a philosopher! I've made up my mind to imitate that fox. Whatever I can't get as I go through the world shall be sour grapes, and no mistake. If one can't reach the grapes, one can stoop to the strawberries.'

'You read these old fables the wrong way, my dear boy,' said Theyre.

'No, I don't. Now look at Graculus Superbus. That story was invented by some enemy of the jackdaws. If you knew jackdaws as well as I do, you'd know that they'd never envy peacocks' feathers. They're too proud of their own dress, and strut about in black like little parsons. It was some peacock told that story.'

'How nonsensical you are, Charlie,' says Clara. 'Why, you know the things are all invented.'

'Not by men. Old Æsop learnt the language of birds and beasts, and wrote down what they said. I shall do the same. They must have something new to say by this time. You learn your stupid Euclid with Mr. Theyre, Clarry; I'm off to the island, to talk to the squirrels.'

And then the boy would run away, and punt himself over to the island, and lose himself in the delight of nature. With him the wildest creatures grew tame. The squirrels would take nuts from his hand; the birds would perch on his shoulder; the fish would come at his call. As he swam in the mere, as he lay on the grass, as he climbed the three great trees, he never lacked companions.

Clara, often in this way left behind, gave Mr. Theyre just as much trouble in a different way. She saw through propositions in Euclid which he expected her to find difficult. Her unconscious consideration of such questions caused her to regard as axioms propositions which Euclid proves very deliberately. And

she was in a tremendous hurry to get outside the A, B, C of the old Greek geometrician, and to find out the application of his problems and theorems to all the manifold wonders of earth and heaven. This vivid curiosity pushed her tutor into a corner many a time.

'I can make a circle with a pair of compasses,' she would say; 'but why does a stone make circles in water when you throw it in? Why is the rainbow half a circle? Why are the sun and moon circles?'

'The circle is the most perfect form,' says' Eustace Theyre.

'Then why doesn't the earth go in a circle round the sun? It would be the shortest way. I can't understand about an ellipse. Mr. Theyre, do draw me an ellipse.'

Had Father Laxman been there, he would have known well how to deal with these two children. He would have caught up Charlie's fancies about birds and beasts, and made of them a magic apologue that would have fascinated the boy entirely. He would have told Clara all she asked, and made a rainbow on a spray of water, and fixed a thread for her to draw an ellipse; and where science hesitated, his active imagination would have found answers. But Eustace Theyre, with only routine-knowledge, and no imagination at all, found himself in endless trouble with these inquisitive young rebels.

Knowing what was his chief impulse, we may be sure that Eustace Theyre in due time tried to make proselytes of his pupils. He could be eloquent on the glories of the Papacy. The children listened with delight to his impassioned stories of saints and martyrs. His pictures of the Pope, the Vicegerent of God, and of the music and magnificence which fill St. Peter's mighty dome, charmed them greatly. Yet to them it was only a fairy tale, hardly so interesting as Aladdin or Sindbad.

In truth, though on the surface they might seem young heathens, Nature had taught Charlie and Clara religion. They knew there must be a God who made this lovely world, with all its happy inhabitants; and they prayed to Him many times a day—prayers often wordless, wishes winged by faith. They were a very long way off from Rome.



CHAPTER VIII.

BLETHIN CASTLE.

"It blew the ghosts (there were ghosts by scores)
Like a laundress's rags through the corridors."

OM and Jack Drax happened, by some inexplicable accident, to be breakfasting together in an unusually amiable mood two days after Mrs. Courtenay's reception. It was a lazy, languid day in Venice: the pigeons in the Square of St. Mark had not energy to fly; there was no breeze to ripple the surface of the lagunes. Perchance it was this meteoric influence which kept the inseparable, irrecon-

cilable brothers from being so pugnacious as usual. Yet who shall say? Perhaps it was Adela Courtenay. Not thirty hours had passed since they left the superb saloons which she had filled with the choicest society of Venice, and they certainly had not quarrelled a dozen times! What could it mean? Were they in love? Widows are to all men dangerous, but they surely ought to be least dangerous to widowers.

They were trifling with their breakfast, and with some letters from England which contained nothing particular, when Blethin Brodspeare entered in his usual energetic way.

'Which goes to the Southern Cross?' he said. 'Which to the Polar Bear? I will give you both messages. I will accompany neither of you. I am going at once—hot foot, as they say in Ireland—to the only country in the world that has never

been thoroughly explored, and never can be.'

- 'Where's that? We'll go with you!' exclaimed both brothers in a breath.
 - 'You promise?'
 - 'Yes. Where is it?'
 - 'England!'

Tom and Jack exchanged looks of horror. It was the last place they had imagined. Blethin laughed:

'Yes, England. I know the world better than most men, and England is the only part of it I don't know. I mean to spend two or three days there. Come with me. You can start for Iceland or Polynesia as soon as you like afterwards. I must get out of this,' he whispered; 'the Courtenay will marry me by force if I don't. I've telegraphed to have everything ready at Blethin. Come straight there with me, and do what you will thereafter.'

The infinite impetus of Blethin Brodspeare carried away man, woman, and child. It was too much for the Drax brothers, who went down before him as a couple of granite boulders go before a sudden swollen mountaintorrent. They gave way. Their special quarrels vanished for the moment in the strength of his energetic will, just as steel burns in oxyhydrogen gas.

There was rapid packing up in Venice that day. Of course Adela Courtenay heard of it. Venice is as thorough a gossip-shop as any village in England. Besides, the astute Adela bestowed silver on servants, and always obtained early intelligence through her confidential cosmeta. She was not at all cross when she heard the news. She liked excitement. Here were a poetic nobleman and two country gentlemen absolutely running away from her, Adela Courtenay, née Mary Zeal. The notion delighted her. She also

would start for England, and open the house in Upper Ten Street.

Ladies can never make so sudden a start as gentlemen. The reason I find to be that 'their things are at the wash;' when a man's in a hurry he let's his shirts go to the devil, but a woman has her pet bits of lace and fanciful falbalas in the laundress's hands, and would deem it a crime to leave them behind. Let us not wonder, therefore, that Adela Courtenay was some days behind Lord Brodspeare and his friends in leaving Venice.

They went straight, these three, to Blethin Castle, which stands in a southern shire. A river fills its moat, and runs downward widening to the sea. It is a grand building, with one vast round tower, inhabited by a colony of owls, and with a multitude of stately rooms, wherein you might entertain a king and all his retinue.

It was a lovely afternoon when they reached the railway-station, half-a-dozen miles from Blethin. They were all, though tough fellows, tired of travel, seeing they had come straight away from Venice, stopping nowhere longer than was absolutely necessary. The journey had been amusing enough, though without any special adventures; but they were uncommonly glad to alight at Blethin Road Station, and to see a group of Brodspeare's servitors ready to take charge of them. The moment the train arrived, a tall, grey-headed gentleman, straight as an arrow and lithe as a cavalryswordsman, came forward to look for Lord Brodspeare.

- 'Ah, Hoare,' said Blethin, 'here you are, I knew you would be. Hardly expected me so suddenly, did you?'
- 'Nothing is certain but the unforeseen,' said Mr. Hoare, who was Brodspeare's con

fidential manager, and who had a tendency to emit apposite proverbs. But for Hoare, Brodspeare, with all his fine income, could by no means have kept straight. To do Blethin justice he knew it, and was grateful, and trusted Hoare so implicitly that, if a scoundrel, he might have ruined him. Hoare, however, was a man of perfect honour, as his history would prove had I time to tell it.

There was a wagonette waiting, with a pair of young horses in it, one black as midnight, the other a red-roan, both full of fire. Another vehicle took the luggage. Blethin stood a moment looking at the horses, then he said to Mr. Hoare:

'They both look like dare-devils.'

'Both are, my lord. The roan is out of Madge Wildfire, and the black out of Tarbrush. They go very well together—I broke them myself.'

Tom and Jack Drax looked rather curi-

ously at this spare old gentleman of about sixty-five, who talked thus coolly of breaking young horses. It is a business (like making love to young women) that seems better suited to an earlier age.

'I suppose I can drive them, Hoare,' said Brodspeare, getting into his seat. 'Now, Jack, now, Tom, let's get home to dinner. Hanged if I don't want mine, after the heaps of beastliness I've eaten and drunken at buffets. After all, there's nothing like Old England. Hoare, is there a rumpsteak in the house?'

'We killed a Devon ox directly we had your telegram,' said Mr. Hoare. 'I believe you will find the steak perfect. I fear there is not much good rumpsteak in Venice.'

'Egad, I should think not,' said Brodspeare, but he said no more, for his horses were just then pulling like fiends, having been set off by the ridiculous shrill bray of a donkey, evidently prophesying rain. They were going down hill, rather rough but not very steep, with a stream crossing the road at the bottom, and then at the other side a much steeper ascent. Blethin held them hard till near the stream, then loosed the reins and lashed them well, crying:

'Now, ye devils, go ahead!'

The impetus with which he drove them down the lower part of the hill took them across the stream and a few score yards up the ascent; but by this time they were in a lather, and not at all anxious to run away. However, Blethin made them move.

'Those two horses are very like you and your brother, Jack,' said Brodspeare, turning round as the steep hill forced them to a halt. 'Must quarrel with circumstances, both of you. Why can't you take your hills easily, as I do? Why can't you be contented philosophers, as I am?'

- 'Now there's a glorious title for your next new poem. Why it would sell like wildfire. Fancy the most discontented man in the world in a new position! It is a capital idea.'
- 'Well,' quoth Jack, 'I think Blethin is a very contented man. Give him his own way, and he wants nothing else.'
- 'Why, what else does anybody want?' asked Tom. 'His own way! As if that wouldn't content any fellow.'
- 'It doesn't,' said Jack. 'People want to be asked to have their own way, or to be apologised to for having their own way. Brodspeare's above those weaknesses, he takes his own way, or we shouldn't be here at this moment.'

They had reached the gate of Blethin Castle. High on the hill, it commanded a splendid stretch of scenery. On each side of

the gateway grew a giant tree, the dexter an oak, the sinister an ash; both had been there for centuries. Both sent their roots deep into the castle moat, fed by the river Blethin, a beautiful winding stream, whose every reach is traceable from the castle-gate down to the southern sea. It shines like a serpent of silver now, as the travellers pause at the gate to look down upon the wide prospect beneath. It passes into the sea through a gateway of red sandstone rock, and on each side of its estuary are the houses of a village which, once inhabited by fishermen only, has, since Brodspeare left England. been discovered by autumnal visitors in search of new haunts. There are new villas, with lawns down to the river; there are others facing the sea. But the fishermen are as busy as ever, and the sails of the trawlers turn from white to dark as they catch and lose the evening rays. The Brodspeare Arms has been rebuilt, and is now an hotel—aye, an hotel with a table d'hôte. Yes, no wonder. Purer or fresher sea there is not around wave-kissed England. Blethin Bay is shut in from the cruel east wind; islands lie in it, to which it is easy and delightful to sail. The great castle standing above gives a romantic grandeur to the scene.

- 'Ah, you told me Blethin was transformed into what they ridiculously call a watering-place, Hoare. Does it grow populous?'
- 'Not very, I am glad to say. But it has brought in money, for speculative builders have wanted leases, and I have made them pay for them pretty well. It has become quite a favourite place with people of the best class, who want to get out of the fashionable mob.'
- 'Would there were an oath to swear by l' cried Brodspeare. 'Hoare, you are too bad. You keep me here, talking of money and

fashion, while that amazing sunset is working miracles in the clouds. You have turned my old tar-smelling village into a resort of the select. I don't suppose all your leases brought in more than I've lost in a night at hazard.'

- 'More reason for doing it, my lord,' quoth Hoare quietly.
- 'Egad, you're right. Come, let's dress and dine.'

The horses had been fretting while they paused. Brodspeare drove through the gateway to the wide door, opening on a superbhall, where a host of servants were waiting. But he waved them aside, and himself showed his friends to a suite of rooms prepared for them on the first-floor.

'Look here, my boys,' he said, 'I know how you love one another. These rooms were specially built for twin brothers of my family, so that they might be always together, and not be interrupted in their quarrels. You see, the bedrooms are at each end of the suite, and there are a parlour and bookroom between. So they could easily separate when they got tired of each other. Will that suit you?

- 'Jack and I never get tired of each other,' said Tom. 'We like quarrelling too much.'
- 'O Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying!' replied Jack. 'There is nothing I detest so much as a quarrel.'
- 'Good-bye,' said Brodspeare, laughing.
 'Dinner's at eight. Look alive.'

A quiet dinner in a comparatively small room. Mr. Hoare did the carving business admirably. Only a couple of footmen. No show, but much comfort. Brodspeare took a few oysters at the commencement, but touched neither soup nor fish.

'No,' he said, 'I reserve myself. I will do vol. 1. 9

justice to the true English food—a steak and stout.'

'A good idea,' said Jack Drax. 'I wish it had occurred to me.'

'My dear Jack, ideas never do occur to you. And very lucky, or you'd have missed a delicious bit of salmon.'

However, Brodspeare held his own opinion, and did his work well on the Devon steak and the London stout that was brought in tankards of silver. The Drax brothers positively became unanimous for once in their lives, and declared that steak and stout were the proper viands for an Englishman to taste first on his arrival home.

'I have wrought a miracle,' said Brodspeare. 'I have reconciled the irreconcilables.'

The talk over dessert passed to many matters.

'I wonder now,' said Tom Drax, 'if you

descend upon Blethin to-morrow, like a god out of Olympus, whether the fashionable few will fall down and worship you much?

'Not they,' quoth Jack. 'They're the fashionable few, don't you hear. They will think themselves much finer folk than the owner of this castle and all the land around it for miles. Who is he? He can't dress. A poet, you say. Who reads poetry? He wouldn't condescend to write such stuff if he hadn't lost money in his wild way abroad. Nobody ever meets poets in decent society.'

'I agree with you, Jack,' said Lord Brodspeare. 'Well, it will be fun taking a look at the old place now it's so transmogrified. Shall we take an early dip? Do they go in for bathing-machines, Hoare?'

'Only a few.'

'Ah, but there's a charming place under the rocks round there to the west, where some small caverns make capital dressingrooms. We'll go there. Come down in the loosest costumes, somewhere about seven, and we'll get a delicious dip, and astonish the natives.'

This was agreed upon. A cigar was smoked. Then, drowsy with travel and a good dinner, they all went to bed with an appetite for sleep, Brodspeare murmuring the lazy lines of the Veronese on his return to Sirmio.



CHAPTER IX.

THE MERMAID.

'She stood like some Greek Lady of the Skies, In marble cut for millions to admire.'

The Inn of Strange Meetings.

RODSPEARE and his two friends

came out upon the Castle terrace
between six and seven in diversi-

fied costumes. There was a general atmosphere of rough towels about them. Nobody wore any socks. They were in that boyish mood which happily comes back at intervals to Englishmen when they are long past their boyhood. The English is a boyish race—a lucky thing for England.

They went through the village, seeing few people. The fishermen were already away in the west, trawling; their brown sails made the sea populous. The visitors were not yet up. The green blinds of the Blethin Hotel showed general sleepiness. Even the unfortunate person whose duty it was to clean multitudinous boots, had probably not yet turned out of bed.

On they went, Brodspeare and Jack and Tom Drax, in the jolliest mood. The rocks were dry; the sea was blue; a few gulls hovered above them, their azure plumage showing their parentage; the world was deliciously quiet. Brodspeare had lyrics in his brain all the way. They came at length to the point which he had mentioned the day before, where rock-caverns made natural dressing-rooms around a beautiful arena of

steadfast sand, over which the sea came with delicate ripples.

'There's a way down here,' said Brodspeare, pointing to a path between two great rocks. 'Come along. It's easy enough.'

It was not very difficult; still, it rather reminded Tom Drax of the saying, 'He who will climb Tintagel must have eyes.'

They had just arrived at a difficult part, and both the Draxes were gathering words of ire to shower on Brodspeare, when his lordship said:

'Hist! Keep still. Look below.'

Right in the centre of the bay there was a high rock, a noble block of granite covered with sea-green vraic, which slanted towards the shore, and was perpendicular on the seaward side. When Brodspeare checked his companions, a figure emerged from one of the caverns, ran across the sands, raced up the slant side of the rock, and took a glorious

header into the advancing tide. Utterly unconscious of any spectators, the girl (for it was a girl) sprang into the embrace of ocean, and swam out to sea. Her brown curls on the surface of the wave were all they could see of her. She swam as if she knew and loved the ocean.

'We must go and bathe somewhere else,' said Jack Drax.

They did so, and this veritable history cannot say when or how the swimmer in that secluded bay got back to her dressing-room.

'Who the devil is she?' thought Blethin Brodspeare, as he was taking his own swim in the glorious shallows of shattered emerald.

'I didn't believe any woman could have taken that header. And she looked a mere girl. I'll go to church on Sunday, if only to see whether there's any lady in the congregation who looks as if she could do such a thing. Lady!' continued Brodspeare in his sea soliloquy. 'Lady! I must read old Carlyle's Sartor Resartus again. Very odd. I know that girl is a lady, though I never saw her clothes. Now what is there about a lady, when denuded of her clothing, which shows that she is a lady? This is a curious question.'

Brodspeare, in fact, was so interested in it, that he forgot to strike out, and got his mouth full of sea-water.

But who was the lady? Who was this mermaid who, all unconscious, had fascinated Lord Brodspeare? She was a very ordinary mortal, so far as position was concerned. She was a nursery-governess, nothing more.

Her life, though short (for she was only twenty), had been sad. Her mother died when she was a child; her father, a poor curate, succumbed to consumptive tendencies, which a little of his rector's port wine night have conquered. No education had poor

Florence Lisle received save what her father gave her, and, unluckily, it was not of the fashionable kind, which would enable her to take a first-class situation as a governess. She could read Virgil and Horace; she knew her Euclid; she was well up in history and geography and English literature; but, alas! she had no accomplishments. So there was nothing for Florence Lisle, unless she chose to turn cook or housemaid, except to become a nursery-governess.

This she did, in a rather queer family. Tubbs, head thereof, was a Luton straw-bonnet-maker. His wife was a silly little woman with a few hundreds a year of her own, and an aristocratic tendency by reason of having a cousin who occupied some menial post at Buckingham Palace. There were two children—a boy and a girl—to whom Florence was in fact servant as well as teacher. She did not care. When she had lost her parents,

and found that the cruel world cared very little whether she lived or died, she resolved to live. . She caught at the first plank afloat in the sea of her shipwreck. She became Tubbs' nursery-governess at something less than he gave his cook; but she did her work well, and the little children became her slaves, and Tubbs and his wife gradually began to dimly perceive that their nursery-governess was in some way superior to themselves. regret to say that they did not therefore offer to increase her salary; but this was a matter of no moment to Florence Lisle, who had not the slightest ambition. All she desired was quietude, and enjoyment of the beauties of As Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs became nature. better acquainted with her, they tried to learn from her what to do, and where to go. guidance led them to Blethin, where they lived at the hotel in stupendous straw-bonnet style.

There was a little talk at the Castle that evening about this nymph of the sea. Tom Drax thought she was charming. Jack Drax thought her no better than she should be. Lord Brodspeare sipped his claret, and said no word.

He went out the next morning alone. He saw Florence Lisle take her header into the sea. He did not think what he had done indecorous, being of opinion that petticoats often conceal an indecorum of which nudity is unaware. The fact is, Brodspeare thought the beautiful girl he had seen leap into the sea worth knowing, and he wanted to find out who she was. He followed her at a respectful distance from her rocky dressing-room to Blethin village. He saw her enter the hotel.

He, waiting a little, also entered. The landlord was out on the farm. The gossiping landlady was only too glad to tell her feudal lord whatever he wanted to know. He learnt that the Tubbses were straw-bonnet makers of much wealth, and that this girl was their nursery-governess. After that he went down to the sea and soliloquised.

'What a world this is I' thought Blethin.
'I am denounced as wicked, because I do what I deem right. That old woman at the inn, I saw clearly enough, thought I wanted to harm this poor girl, and was quite ready to help me. May God destroy such wretches! Now I wonder whether I'm right. I believe in instinct. Twice have I seen that girl rush into the sea—I am afraid it was too bad to go a second time—and I don't think I can be wrong about her. She's brave, that's certain; she's a rare beauty; I believe she's good. I must have a talk with her.'

It did not occur to Lord Brodspeare that there would be any harm in his talking to the little nursery-governess, or that the world could make any harm from it. He could not see the long distance there was between them in position. She appeared to him a most perfect lady, something infinitely better than himself. It did not even occur to him that he was in love. He fancied he was only curious to know this brave and beautiful creature, to talk to her, and find out if she was as different from other women as she appeared to be.

He was a straightforward fellow, and his first impulse was to call at the hotel and send in his card and say he wished to speak to her. But, according to social usage, this would be an impertinence without an introduction. How to get an introduction then? Mr. Hoare, who managed everything, would perhaps be surprised at a request for an introduction to a nursery-governess. It was decidedly awkward. He lay awake at night

turning the matter over, till an idea suddenly flashed across his mind. He would throw open the Castle grounds on a certain day for the benefit of the Blethin visitors, and perchance she might come with her employers.

'Hoare,' he said the next day, 'as this is my first appearance at the Castle since Blethin has become a place of resort, I should like to throw open the grounds and the Castle for a day for the benefit of the Blethin folk and the visitors.'

'As you please, my lord,' said Hoare rather grimly, for he did not quite approve the idea.

'And a little refreshment for them, you know, Hoare.'

'Is it necessary, my lord?' he replied, looking a little severe.

'Yes, yes, Hoare; we must do the thing well if we do it at all. We'll have refreshments in the dining-hall, just a little some-

thing cold, and some sparkling wine and claret-cup, and whatever you think will suit in that way.'

- 'But surely, my lord, you'll make some restrictions as to who shall take refreshments, or you will be having more than you counted on. Shall I issue tickets?'
- 'Do just as you think proper, Hoare, but be liberal, and do it as soon as you can. Can it be done to-morrow?'
- 'Hardly, my lord; and the people themselves will like a little longer notice—not less than three days, I think.'

Lord Brodspeare found himself very impatient for the next three days. Tom and Jack Drax could not understand what was the matter.

'Blethin isn't happy now he's come to England,' said Jack; 'I begin to think the fair widow is too much for him after all, and that he wishes he hadn't run away from her.' 'Nothing of the kind,' said Tom, in an irritable way; 'he could have stayed with her had he chosen.'

But Tom did not differ from his brother on this occasion so much as he professed; and he had another reason beyond his love of controversy. The widow had positively bewitched him, and he was jealous of Lord Brodspeare. Therefore Jack's remark was as aggravating as it could possibly be.

'Well, I don't know what it is,' said Jack; 'if he isn't in love it's a very good imitation of it, for he goes mooning about, and is quite changed in manner.'

Jack little thought how he was annoying his brother.

Tom had called himself a fool over and over again, and had argued with himself on his folly, but all to no purpose. The vision of the widow would come before him. She seemed to have some strange power over

him. He saw the change in Lord Brodspeare, and fancied it was from the same cause, or rather caused by the same person.

The great day for the Blethin folk arrived. Mr. Hoare had done everything in his power to please his lord, though he strongly disapproved of the whole proceeding. The tickets for admission to the dining-hall had been wisely distributed. A certain number had been given to the hotel-keeper, who presented a couple to the Tubbses, not thinking perhaps that the governess was good enough to have one.

Mrs. Tubbs, arrayed in all her glory, was ready for the occasion, but the one person for whom all this had been done was very nearly staying away, for she had arranged to remain with one of the children, who had the toothache, but the amiable Tubbs would insist on her coming.

So she came.

Towards the end of the afternoon the Tubbses went into the dining-hall, leaving Florence to take care of herself for a time. She found herself under great trees in a lovely corner of the lawn, with music not too near, and she sat down quietly. The Castle was just lighted up, and the lights rained upon the lawns. With the music was interspersed a murmur of voices, and she sat and listened. The movement and music had a dreamy effect on her. She leaned back on the garden-seat, and tried to lazily enjoy the mingled delights of the evening. At this moment Lord Brodspeare found her, probably by instinct, or perhaps he had been watching an opportunity. He sat by her side silently. Florence, who did not know him, thought him a nice sort of fellow enough. Let her be forgiven. Living with the Tubbses, whose idea of literature was very small, how should Florence know anything about the

greatest poet of the day? Still, she felt a little tremulous at his approach. How rosyred would she have blushed had she known that he had witnessed her headers in Blethin Bay!

At seaside places there is a laxity of cere-Introductions are easy. People get acquainted with each other for a time, and enjoy the short society, and forget one another the moment they have taken tickets homewards. Florry, as her father was wont to call her, had made many brief acquaintances at Blethin, and forgotten them in a week, and so she was not at all astonished when this energetic gentleman with a musical voice commenced a conversation by talking about the weather. It is a capital subject to begin with, always interesting to everybody. The youngest child likes sunshine. the oldest victim of rheumatism hates an east wind. All good talkers regard the weather as a subject for easy commencement.

- 'What a sultry evening!' said Blethin; but there is a cool breeze from the sea.'
- 'Deliciously cool,' murmured Florry. 'I always think the sea-breeze so very nice.'
 - 'You like the sea?' said Blethin.
- 'O, I adore it. I think to swim in the sea is the greatest luxury I know. I like to dive far down and see the beautiful changeable colour of the water.'
- 'Why, you are quite a wonderful swimmer for a lady,' said Blethin. 'I am very fond of it myself. I sometimes think I'll go and live in the South Sea Islands, where people live in the sea—indeed I am told they sleep there.'

Florry laughed merrily.

'That must be charming,' she said, 'better than sleeping in a hammock even. When I was a little girl I used to sleep in a hammock under the trees on hot summer nights, and it was so pleasant. But the birds, O dear! they used to wake me at three in the morning, the troublesome little things. The starlings used to come and talk to one another quite close to me; and there was a blackbird, I remember, that began to sing long before sunrise, and finished just about the time papa came to take me out of the hammock. I couldn't get out by myself, you know.'

'What a merry little chatterer!' thought Lord Brodspeare. And he said: 'Your father must have had curious ideas to let you sleep out of doors in that way.'

'My father,' she replied quite proudly, 'was a clergyman, and ought to have been an archbishop. I am not a bit ambitious for myself, but I should like to show people that papa taught me some things worth knowing.

Infortunately for me, he did not teach me

anything that children want to be taught, so I am only a nursery-governess. But I hope to get a chance some day.'

Blethin was greatly amused.

- 'Do you read much?' he asked.
- 'Oh, I have very little time. I have a boy and girl to look after from morning to night—two little things, you know. I read Shakespeare of an evening, now and then, and I try to keep up some of the things papa taught me, but my master and mistress laugh at me for it.'
- 'Master and mistress,' said Blethin, almost fiercely. 'Why you talk as if you were a servant!'
- 'So I am,' she cried, 'and I am quite content. Indeed, Mr. Tubbs' cook quite looks down upon me. She dresses twice as fine, and has a young man who is deeply enamoured of her and the cold meat. Dear me, why should I quarrel with my position? I get

up early to swim, and I sit up late to read, and I haven't a trouble in the world. But really you have made me talk about myself in quite an absurd way. I think you ought to talk about yourself a little now.'

There ran through Blethin Brodspeare a shudder. He had taken quite a sudden liking for this garrulous girl, who chatted away to him with innocent fearlessness. After a moment's pause, he said:

'Well, that's quite fair, though I'd rather hear you talk about yourself; I'm not at all an interesting person. I never slept in a hammock in my life, though I shall certainly try it, as you seemed to find it so pleasant.'

- 'Well, never mind what you haven't done; tell me what you have done.'
- 'Not much. I have been nearly all over the world, and am rather tired of it. I have seen the most beautiful cities and rivers and

mountains, and I would rather be sitting here talking with you.'

- 'Oh, how kind you are to say so,' said Florry. 'But of course you do not mean it. Gentlemen say pretty things to ladies for fun, but I do like to hear anything pretty and poetical. But perhaps you would rather be here because you like England so well; is it so?'
- 'I used to think I hated England,' he answered, 'more than any other place, but during the last few days I have changed my opinion.'
 - 'Why?' she said, quite innocently.
- 'Because I have found a pretty English flower that is sweeter than any flower I know.'
- 'What can he mean?' thought Florence.
 'He must be out of his mind, and yet he seems all right, and is such a gentleman.
 I am sure papa would have liked him.'

- 'I am afraid I puzzle you by what I say,' said Lord Brodspeare, seeing her astonished look. 'I hope I have not frightened you. I am sure you would not have talked so pleasantly if you had not felt pretty sure about me.'
- 'Of course not,' she said. But she felt puzzled still, and thought perhaps it would be better to join the Tubbses, so she continued: 'but I am afraid my party will be looking for me.' (The little story-teller, she knew they were happy enough with their food.) 'Will you help me to look for them? I suppose they are in the house?'
 - 'Certainly,' he said, and offered his arm.
- 'They are not aristocratic people to look at,' said Florence; 'but they are very good.' She felt there was such a difference between her companion and the Tubbses that the apology rose unconsciously to her lips.

He led the way to the upper terrace. In

the dining-hall had been prepared what the newspapers call a 'cold collation.' The windows were open, and many people were seated at the table; the Tubbses amongst them. They were too much engaged on some dainty dish to notice the entrance of their governess with Lord Brodspeare.

- 'There they are,' said Florence.
- 'Yes,' said Lord Brodspeare, 'they seem well engaged, and there is no room at that end of the table, so suppose we get seats at the other end.'
 - 'But I have no ticket,' said Florence.
- 'Neither have I,' he replied. 'Take this seat.'

There was something in his manner which made Florence feel he must be obeyed. She took the seat rather tremblingly. Not that she disbelieved Lord Brodspeare, but she feared Mrs. Tubbs' eyes.

'Now,' he said, 'what will you take? See,

here is a pâté de foie gras, will you try it?

'Is it nice?' she said. 'I have never tasted it.'

'It is goose-liver pie, you know.' As he spoke he telegraphed to a footman for champagne, which at once frothed into a Salviati saucer.

'How deliciously cold!' she said. 'So this is champagne. I never tasted it before.'

A great many people were much shocked at the way in which this 'young person' went on with Lord Brodspeare. Everybody else in the room knew this famous peer and author, though poor Florence did not; and most of them knew that she was only the nursery-governess of 'those Tubbses.' So, when she was brought into the room in this way, and treated like a princess, and well supplied by eager footmen with the choicest

viands of Blethin Castle, a thrill of envy, horror, suspicion, ran through the minds of the people present. They regarded her character as lost utterly. They all looked at the Tubbses to see what was their opinion on the subject, and whether they realised the depth of degradation to which their governess had fallen. For of course, everybody knew how dreadful a man Lord Brodspeare was. Poor Florence Lisle was ruined altogether in the opinion of the Blethin visitors.

Unconscious of all this she prattled on—for her talk may well be described as prattling. Florence knew nothing of the world, so she talked in simple and innocent fashion, yet what she said had far more wisdom and suggestion in it than the cleverer conversation of the Widow Courtenay, who knew everything. She told her own simple story, almost without knowing it. To Blethin Brodspeare she was a new and most

delicate study; he had inhaled the rarest odours of a thousand conservatories, and here was an unseen wild-flower, whose faint breath seemed sweeter than any of them. He thoroughly enjoyed her easy talk: she, simply regarding him as a Blethin visitor, or, more probably, a private visitor at the Castle, whom she would never meet again, chatted freely, and laughed gaily as, over pine-apple and Yquem, he told wild stories of his adventures in far-off seas. He had a low, musical, articulate voice, that came direct to the ear, yet was less audible to persons sitting near than a whisper would be.

Presently the Tubbs family made a move to leave the room.

Mrs. Tubbs looked angrily across at Florence, murmuring to her husband in an undertone:

'The young hussy will hardly dare to stay after we have left.'

Beautiful ferns and flowers arranged all down the table had hitherto hidden the Tubbses from Florence, but hearing the move in their direction, she caught sight of Mrs. Tubbs' face as she stood up, and she said in a frightened tone to Lord Brodspeare,

'I think Mrs. Tubbs wants me.'

'Sit still,' he said, in his low, emphatic voice, and Florence felt bound to obey him. 'I am going to speak to them; do not be astonished at anything I say.'

He walked down the long room. Florence saw him bow and speak, but could not hear what was said. Presently she saw them all walking towards her.

'I had very great pleasure in making her acquaintance,' she heard Lord Brodspeare saying. 'I am charmed with her intelligence; I cannot help thinking she must be related to me. My maternal grandmother

was a Lisle; there is a portrait of her in the gallery.'

'Indeed, my lord!' said Mrs. Tubbs, who had by this time put on her pleasantest smile.

Mrs. Tubbs was one of those people who worship rank, and her delight at being in conversation with a 'lord' knew no bounds.

For the first time it occurred to Florence that her companion must be Lord Brodspeare. The blood rushed to her face, and there was a ringing in her ears as the three approached her. Mrs. Tubbs, seeing her appearance, interpreted it as meaning that she was ashamed of herself, and she doubted in her own mind whether Lord Brodspeare was quite honourable, notwithstanding all he said. Still he was a 'lord' and the opportunity of making his acquaintance was not to be missed. And 'lords would be lords,' as she said to herself, 'and they will

look after the girls; and if the girls don't know how to take care of themselves, more blame to them. I always took good care of myself, and I leave others to do the same.'

Such were Mrs. Tubbs' reflexions.

'I was just remarking to this lady,' said Lord Brodspeare to Florence, 'that I think you must be related to me, for you are really very much like the picture of my grandmother, who was a Lisle. You must come up some day to the Castle, and see the gallery by daylight. Will you not?' he said, turning to the Tubbses to include them in the invitation.

'Oh, certainly,' said Mrs. Tubbs. 'I shall be too delighted.'

Poor Florence was terribly confused. A crowd of thoughts came rushing in on her, all mixed up. She could not get over the surprise of her companion being Lord Brod-

speare. Why had he taken such an interest in her? Wasn't Mrs. Tubbs very angry? Why was he so anxious to please Mrs. Tubbs? as he evidently was. How funny she should be like his grandmother, and of the same name! She never doubted this statement of Lord Brodspeare's, though Mrs. Tubbs was saying to herself, 'That is all a pack of lies.'

'Now do, pray, be seated,' said Brodspeare to the Tubbses, 'and allow me to persuade you to take another glass of wine. Now won't you drink my health, Mr. Tubbs?' he said, knowing it was just the thing to please Tubbs.

The footmen, well-disciplined though they were, could not suppress a titter, while Blethin Brodspeare sat with as calm a visage as if he were a perpetual curate settling some of the perpetual grievances of his poor parishioners.

'Yes, we'll drink his lordship's health,' said

Tubbs; 'and may he long live to enjoy his wealth, and make other people happy;' with which hearty wish the bonnet-maker drank a glass of champagne full to the brim.

Thereupon Lord Brodspeare, addressing him, said:

'I am much obliged to you, Mr. Tubbs. You have drunk my health in most felicitous terms. Allow me now to drink yours, and to hope that your famous business, known throughout the world for its supremacy above all others, will continue to flourish and expand.'

Tubbs looked happy. He was proud of his business; but Mrs. Tubbs would have preferred it left unmentioned.

'The trade of the country is its wealth,' he continued, 'and I am proud to give a welcome to one of its foremost representatives.'

Mrs. Tubbs smiled blandly, feeling it her

duty to acquiesce in anything a 'lord' said, though she did not altogether like the subject. She endeavoured to change it.

'I am sure our young friend,' she said (meaning a compliment to Florence by putting her on an equality with herself), 'will always remember to-day with very much pleasure.'

'She must be a great acquisition to your family,' said Lord Brodspeare.

'I'm sure we're much delighted with her, your lordship,' said the artist in straw. 'Miss Lisle is one of the most lady-like and accomplished young persons I ever met, and quite different from any we have had before.'

As it was not Blethin Brodspeare's wish to have a disquisition in public on Miss Lisle's excellencies, he said:

'Well, Mr. Tubbs, will you and Mrs. Tubbs come and see the picture-gallery to-morrow. Will four o'clock suit your convenience?'

- 'Perfectly, perfectly, your lordship,' said the obsequious Tubbs.
- 'And I am sure, my lord,' said Mrs. Tubbs,
 'you will allow my son and daughter to accompany Miss Lisle. They will enjoy it so much.'
- 'Certainly, any of your friends,' he replied.

 He gave a longing look at Florence as he parted from them, but she did not dare to raise her eyes. She was dreading the moment of being left with the Tubbses and the probability of reproaches from Mrs. Tubbs.

But she need not have feared. When Lord Brodspeare really fixed a time for them to go and see the family portraits, Mrs. Tubbs began to think there might be something in it after all, so her first remark was:

'Well, my dear, suppose you are related to his lordship, after all. Perhaps you are a cousin. How very fortunate for you. I should think the family will hardly allow you to work, though I'm sure you might go on living with us as one of the family.'

Such a prospect was not particularly pleasant to Florence, but she was glad that nothing worse was said.

Florence could not get to sleep for a long time that night. It had been a very strange day. She had met one of her heroes of romance. She was romantic in the true sense. She believed there were plenty of men and women in the world like her favourites in 'Shakespeare,' but she had not often been brought in contact with them. Her father was a hero to her, and her old nurse, Betty Fawdon, who had kept her father's house, and been their only servant for years, and was now her only friend, was a heroine. She could not read and write, but she was a true, noble woman; and to

Florence she seemed, when compared with Mrs. Tubbs, a most perfect gentlewoman.

Now Lord Brodspeare was one of her heroes. In trying to make out who he was like she fell happily asleep.

The next day the whole party went to the Castle at four o'clock. Lord Blethin met them in the grounds. He led them to the house, and left the Tubbs family in the care of a footman, saying to Florence:

'Come this way, we will first go and see the portrait of our relation, for I'm sure we are related, before we go through the gallery.'

Florence looked nervously at Mrs. Tubbs to see what she thought of this arrangement, but Lord Brodspeare was not to be disobeyed. She soon found herself in front of a portrait of a charming girl of about seventeen.

'Oh how pretty!' she exclaimed. 'I cannot be like that.' She had only thought of a grandmother as connected with age, and did not count upon seeing any one so lovely.

- 'I think you are very like,' he answered.
- 'Do, please, let us bring Mrs. Tubbs to see it,' she said anxiously.

They were passing to the room to which the Tubbses had been sent, through a private corridor, lighted from the ceiling, hung with pictures, with statues standing at intervals. A sketch by Ary Scheffer, of Faust and Gretchen in the garden, followed by Mephistopheles and the old harridan to whom he made diabolic love, hung on one side of the gallery, but just below it, bathed in lucid light, was a pure statue of Psyche—a soul in marble. The two caught Blethin's eye at the same instant. He said:

'Look at that picture, Miss Lisle. Am I at all like either of the figures there painted?'

- 'Oh!' she cried, 'that is charming. What a lovely scene! But—well—what shall I say! I don't think you are a fool like Faust or a knave like Mephistopheles.'
- 'So you think Faust a fool?' said Lord Brodspeare.
- 'Surely he was,' she answered. 'Only a fool could think that a flower will live when it is plucked and crushed.'
- 'My Nereid is a sage sister of silverankled Thetis,' he thought.

They came to the room into which the Tubbses already had been ushered, and were sitting appalled by the grandeur of the apartment, where full-length pictures on panel of knights and ladies on horseback, alternated with groups of flowers and fruit in wood-carving.

The Tubbses beheld porcelain cups on a gold salver, placed upon a porphyry table with serpentine bronze legs; they sate on chairs unutterably soft; they regarded themselves in immense plate-glass mirrors. It was 'Wonderland' to them.

And that Miss Lisle, whose superiority to them they had in some unconscious way recognised, should be akin to the lord of all this splendour, seemed to them amazing. Hitherto, they had considered that by paying her so much a year they had neutralised any such superiority; but now it seemed that no amount a year could repay Lord Brodspeare's relation for condescending to teach their children.

The Teutonic Tubbses! How your Teuton loves a lord! Not so the Keltic races in their prime. I do not care about prefixes myself. I deem Bismarck no stronger for being nicknamed Prince. When you say Cæsar, there is no need to add *Imperator*. When you say Shakespeare, the poet is not a necessary adjunct.

The Tubbses had their coffee and a chasse; the Tubbs children had fruit and sweetmeats heretofore quite unknown to them; and meanwhile Lord Brodspeare furtively talked to Florence, trying to make her understand that it was all done for her sake. and all done with harmless intent. simple child, imagined no harm. for her, the abominable slanders fixed upon Brodspeare by society and the press because he chose to live in his own way had never caused her eyes to smart or her ears to tingle. She had never conceived so vulgar a villain possible as Lord Brodspeare was described by his enemies. When she met him, her instinct taught her that he was a gentleman, as indeed he was; a man incapable of wronging a friend or betraying a woman; but a man so eccentric and wayward in his modes of action that he often did vast harm in public opinion to those he loved best.

On this occasion he sent the Tubbs family, after they had seen everything (all for the sake of Florence Lisle), home in one of his own carriages. Of course all Blethin found it out and talked about it. The Tubbses bragged immediately (in confidence) to all their acquaintances that Miss Lisle was a cousin of Lord Brodspeare's. Their acquaintances listened incredulously, thought what fools they were to be so easily taken in. As if everybody didn't know what a vile life Lord Brodspeare had led, and how many poor simple girls he had ruined! Everybody was shocked at the Tubbses. Everybody knew what the end would be.



CHAPTER X.

WHAT SHE THOUGHT OF IT ALL.

'When life puts on those weary moods
From which the soul would fain be free,
Take counsel with the whispering woods,
Take counsel with the murmuring sea.'

Y, forest and ocean are God's sworn counsellors.

'Nature never did betray The heart that loved her.'

The Greeks peopled both with a mystic life, seeing beautiful consolers everywhere. No need to be either polytheist or pantheist to

recognise God's kiss in the sweet south wind, His voice amid the multitudinous boughs of populous woods, or the innumerable surges of the unresting sea. There are many things worth learning, but nothing so well worth learning as what we call Nature. Now there is a periodical called *Nature*, whose wise editor would doubtless say:

'Right! Study Darwin, Tyndall, Wallace, Huxley, Lubbock! Study us!'

But I, wandering by sea-shore or in lonely wood, remember that fine saying of Bacon's; 'Quod in Natura naturata Lex, in Natura naturante Idea dicitur." Cicero might have objected to the Latin, but Erasmus would not. What does it mean, but that these scientists are mere grammarians, who can work out the syntax, and sometimes even the prosody of existence, but who cannot reach the great primal Idea which whispered in the ear of every poet at his birth?

Now, when I use that word poet, I claim to use it with an extension that is perfectly logical. A poet means a maker; nothing more, nothing less. A philosopher or physiologist or astronomer usually means a critic of what is made. In fact, you may divide all human beings who think into those who make ideas and those who weigh and measure ideas. The former are poets, though they may never write a line of verse; the latter are critics, even though they burst into rhythm and rhyme. To take purely literary examples of the contrast between form and reality, Pope was a critic, De Quincey was a poet.

To digress and desult no longer, Florence Lisle was of the poet-race, though never will she make a rhyme all through her life. She made delightful dreamy thoughts as she wandered by the grand, calm, consolatory sea. She had conjured up for herself long

ago what a great English noble resembled, what his mansion would be, what splendour of service would attend his lofty festivals. Of such things had she dreamt, as well also had she dreamt of Fairyland, the gay haunt of babyhood, where Oberon and Titania and Puck have it all their own way, and play the deuce with us heavier mortals. Likewise. she had imagined Giantland, and looked up awe-stricken at Colossi in the form of men huger than Nineveh or Babylon sculptured to bear the roofs of enormous She had heard voices of woodnymphs in the woods, though, doubtless, 'twas only the coo of the cushat. She had seen mermaidens on the rolling sea, or, at any rate, imagined them.

The morning after the visit to Blethin Castle, she was treated by the Tubbs family with an unusual civility which amazed her. They had been in the habit of 'ordering her about,' as the kitchen phrase is, but now they behaved to her most respectfully. She was not satisfied with this phase of things. Though dreamy and imaginative, her judgment on practical matters was clear, and she saw well enough that the Tubbses were simply influenced by a belief in what Lord Brodspeare had said and done.

She could not help feeling there were difficulties in the way. She might perchance be very distantly related to Lord Brodspeare, but the relationship was too far off to be recognised. She could hardly, as a nurserygoverness, claim friendship with a nobleman, and yet Lord Brodspeare had spoken to her in such a manner as to lead her to suppose that he did not intend to lose sight of her. If only her father were alive, she thought; he was fit to be the friend of any man, however exalted his position.

Florence wandered by the loneliest part of vol. 1.

the Blethin shore, thinking deeply over this matter. The miraculous murmur of the wild wide sea filled her ear with its fine soft music. The wayward waves came up to her feet as she tripped along the yellow sands in absent mood. The seamews dipped and whirled above her and she did not see: nor saw she the sails in the distance, and the beautiful variable squadrons of cloud-angels led out to battle by the wilful winds. She was drinking in all this beauty insensibly and silently; but meanwhile she was revolving what she should say and do in regard to Lord Brodspeare and herself. It was a hard problem for such a mere village girl; a lady, a gentleman's daughter, but ignorant of the world and innocent of harm.

And she had no creature to help her. Betty would not understand it. Could she ask Mr. or Mrs. Tubbs? As she reflected, it was clear to her that they would decide that a peer of the realm must either be very good or very bad.

Meanwhile, several people had been talking of Florence, both at Blethin Castle and the gossipy village of Blethin. Brodspeare and his two friends, breakfasting together in a room that looked far over the glorious seascape, with its innumerable lights and shadows, its unimaginable movement and music, were comparing the scene with Venice, and rather to the disadvantage of the 'sun-girt' city. Of course there was difference of opinion among them.

'I like this grey sea, lashed into foam and alive with gulls,' said Tom Drax, 'better than that oriental sapphire of the Mediterranean that Dante makes such a fuss about; and I call the canals of Venice mere ditches, and the lagunes not much better than ponds. A lot of poetry has been written about them,

but I consider poetry mere nonsense, don't you, Brodspeare?'

'I certainly do,' he said, laughing at Tom's earnestness. 'But don't bother me just now, that's a good fellow, for I'm making myself a lobster salad on a special principle, and that's more momentous than an epic poem. I am trying Devonshire cream as a substitute for Lucca oil. When all the verse I have written is wholly erased from the memories of men, this grand idea in the sublime art of cookery will be remembered.'

Jack Drax was about to say something contradicting his brother on the comparative beauty of English and Italian seas, when the butler brought in the letter-bag.

'Sort the letters, Thompson,' said Lord Brodspeare, and went on preparing his novel mayonnaise.

There were about fifty for Mr. Hoare,

who had breakfasted long ago, and was doing business on horseback, as was his healthful matutinal custom.

There was one for Thomas Drax, Esquire, and well he knew the stiff, clerkly hand. There were two for Brodspeare, both in female handwriting. He tossed them aside, and went on with his mayonnaise.

'I am at the age,' said Blethin, 'when, in certain moods, one prefers the lobster to the lady. Read your letter, old boy.'

Tom Drax read:

'HONOURED SIR AND MR. JOHN,

'This is to state that affairs at Draxfell are going on well, and I have sold the shorthorns to great profit, having paid in two thousand pounds and odd shillings to the bank, and there is a fine head of deer, but I have had no chance of selling venison, and the game has increased wonderfully; but Master Charles keeps down the wild-fowl. Miss Clara and Master Charles are in good health and spirits; but Mistress Gibbon, who is a woman of tolerable sense, thinks they are too much under the thumb of the young priest of the Latin communion, who gives them lessons. I have not had opportunity of observing this. The priest seemeth a modest young man, but I have learnt that seeming is deceitful. Moreover, Mistress Gibbon is doubtless in her dotage. Yet should the matter be inquired into, seeing that all things Romish are things devilish.

'I am,

'Honoured Sir and Mr. John,
'Yours humbly to command,
'TIMOTHY RADSTOCK.'

Tom Drax read the letter through, and pushed it to his brother.

'Old Timothy's a lunatic,' he said. 'What

harm can this young priest do the children? I wish he'd stick to his business of looking after the farms.'

'Like you!' cried Jack in a fury. 'Why I remember when you were in an awful rage because this priest was teaching the children. I thought little of it then, because it seemed an accident, but now that he has stuck there so long, I should just like to know what it means. I'll go and see, and wring his neck if he has been perverting them.'

'What a couple of quarrelsome children you are!' said Lord Brodspeare, who was washing down his Devon mayonnaise with a glass of old Montrachet—the wine for oyster and lobster. 'Telegraph to Draxfell, and let's all go there together. You can find me a bedroom. I back myself as a match for any Jesuit priest. I should like to have some of old Keziah's cookery, and make the acquaintance of Clara and Charles. What

say you? Ponder the question, my dear boys, while I read these two letters.'

He read the first and laughed, and tossed it to Tom Drax. Thus it ran:

'Upper Ten Street.

'DEAR LORD BRODSPEARE,

'Please come and see me, and bring your two original friends, who are always quarrelling. My love to them both. If they were both in love with me, what a delicious duel we should see.

'Yours, with reservations,
'ADELA COURTENAY.'

Then he threw the second to Jack. It was curt if not courteous:

'If you, Lord Brodspeare—fiend in mortal garb—dare take advantage of the lady with

whom you have lately been playing the fool, a terrible revenge will fall on you.

'ATE.

'Ah, old boy, your sins begin to find you out,' said Jack Drax. 'We saw you had the prettiest girl in the world to talk to the other day, and we agreed, for once, to go off on flirtations of our own among the Blethin mobocracy, and leave you to your pretty partner, and now there's a savage sweetheart threatening you with a bullet.'

'He bears a charmed life,' said Tom Drax.
'And as to the lady, I commend his taste, if he thinks of her. I never saw a purer Greek face, a finer form, an expression of the whole figure that showed so clearly intelligence and courage and chastity. She's a true woman, I'll swear, by the honour of my own mother.'

'She is, Tom,' said Blethin Brodspeare,

'and I am almost sorry I have met her, for my own sake and hers, for you know what I am, my dear boys. I dread to trust myself to love a woman for fear of what my mad wayward temper would bring on her. I should not like to kill that absolute flower of beauty. It is very sad. Where think you I saw her first?'

'Where?' they both asked. Blethin Brodspeare laughed.

'Did you ever see a beautiful daughter of Nereus plunging to hide her rose-tinged beauty in the sea? Do you remember that morning when we modestly retired from a lady's bathing-chamber, though there was room enough. I saw, though the lissom creature that sprang into the wave was an immense way off, that she had the power and courage of a lady, and I resolved to find her out.'

'How did you do it?' said Jack.

- 'I don't communicate my methods to inferior imitators,' he replied. 'I will simply tell you this: what I derived from the charm of her form in the vague distance, is verified by the charm of her mind. If I could dream of marriage, she is the girl I would marry. But life is all "If."'
- 'And if she would not marry you!' said Tom Drax.
- 'I should take her,' said Blethin Brodspeare. 'However, let us dismiss the subject. Your letters and mine considered, I propose that we go to town to-morrow, and face Adela Courtenay. She must have some object in leaving Venice in such a hurry and going to London in September. Then, if we can get out of her soft clutches, we'll run down to Draxfell, and try to rescue those dear children of yours, whom I long to see, from the clutches of the Jesuits.'

Tom and Jack Drax agreed. Most men

whom Blethin Brodspeare cared to influence were at his mercy.

In making this arrangement he had not forgotten Florence. He was puzzled what to do about her. He would like at once to place her in some better position, and hardly knew what to propose. He knew how scandalous the world is, and what would be said. He was afraid to offer himself at once, afraid for her sake. He concluded it would be best to keep out of her sight for a little time, and consider the matter. He had learnt from her that the Tubbses would remain at Blethin about a month longer; so he thought he could readily find her, or write to her.



CHAPTER XI.

SCANDAL IN BLETHIN VILLAGE.

'Ay, every village hath its (s) candle shop.'

Erasmi Adagia.

'No light without candle,
No fun without scandal.'

Tupperi Procerbia.

the gossips at the Blethin Hotel next day. That a wretched nur-

sery-governess, lanky and gawky, and heaven knows what else, should have the impudence even to talk to Lord Brodspeare, was frightful. It did not occur to these chatterers that if Blethin Brodspeare had not been attracted by a strange intuition of Florence Lisle's beauty, seen under poetic aspect, they would never have entered the guarded gates of Blethin Castle. Everybody looked askant at her now. Everybody thought her slightly improper.

Of course it was all a pretence that she was Lord Brodspeare's cousin.

The Tubbs' acquaintances talked to the Tubbses so very seriously, that at last old Tubbs was ordered by Mrs. Tubbs to inform Miss Lisle that really under such suspicious circumstances she could not allow her any longer to corrupt the morals of the small Tubbses. Old Tubbs, straw-bonnet maker though he was, had some dim idea of a lady when he saw one, and Florence Lisle was a lady; so he objected to insult her, and actually so far rebelled against Mrs. Tubbs' well-

understood authority as to say she might do it herself if she liked. Mrs. Tubbs was just in the humour to dismiss, not only her governess but her husband also.

So Florence, when she returned from a pleasant afternoon stroll upon the yellow sands, wherein she, unconscious and innocent girl, had been wandering in perfect happiness, enjoying the sapphire of the sky, the musical murmur of the sea, the delicious thought of new friendships, and not once perceiving that almost every one she passed looked at her in a critical, suspicious way, was sharply awakened from a lovely reverie by a summons to see Mrs. Tubbs.

That lady, agitated and irritated, was not a pleasant sight. Early in the morning her civility to Florence had been amazing; for she regarded her as Lord Brodspeare's cousin, and bent her knees in great British fashion to a member of the aristocracy.

Now, a few hours later, having been informed by many good-natured friends that Lord Brodspeare was the gayest of Lotharios, and that he had not got any female cousins, Mrs. Tubbs was prepared to receive poor Florence as a hen with a brood of chickens receives a possible enemy. All the frills and furbelows she wore were ruffled like a hen's feathers. Florence saw there was electricity in the atmosphere, but she was in a careless, dreamy mood, and thought little about it. Imaginative creature, she lived in two worlds, and if the lower sphere was unpleasant could retreat to the higher.

'Miss Lisle!' said Mrs. Tubbs, 'I have decided that it is necessary for us to part. Your behaviour the last two days with Lord Brodspeare, who is a man of the loosest—yes, the very loosest character—was not what I call respectable. And I am told that his statement that you are his relation

is entirely false and got up for a mere pretence. I shall be glad if you will prepare to leave to-morrow. Mr. Tubbs will write a cheque for your salary.'

Florence was amazed and aroused. The spirited young girl looked at the obese, shapeless, flabby woman, with eyes that ought to have scorched her to a cinder.

'To-morrow!' she said; 'I go at once. How dare you speak to me so insolently! Lord Brodspeare is a gentleman, and I am a lady, and uneducated women like you cannot understand the conduct of ladies and gentlemen. I am no longer your servant, Mrs. Tubbs.'

The straw-bonnet maker's wife was appalled. Florence spoke too strongly, perhaps, but she was armed with conscious innocence, and would not give way a hair's breadth. She walked out of the room, and rang for a chambermaid to pack up her belongings.

The place grew hateful to her, with all this gossip, and she resolved to go to London,—to Betty, her old nurse. There she would soon get work.

Mrs. Tubbs was aghast at this 'young person's defiant mood. She was doubly angry, because she had begun to worship her as a cousin of Lord Brodspeare's, and now found she was nothing of the kind. However, it was well over; though who would manage Stanley and Arabella she Stanley Tubbs, when he couldn't think. heard Miss Lisle was going away, sworepositively swore, the little wretch—that he would stick pins into any other governess. Arabella Tubbs sat on a chair, and boohooed, till the manager of the hotel sent up a courteous message to say that she was disturbing the establishment.

Florence Lisle had rather liked these two children, Stanley and Arabella, who, under

1

her management, had grown somewhat less like gorillas than they were when she first took them in hand. They had been regular young rebels at first, having been in the hands of stalwart maidservants, who tried to keep them in order by the process of assault and battery, having no other notion of management.

They found it impossible to rebel against Florence, who told them what to do in a tone that showed them she meant it, and who at the same time gave them kind and intelligent instruction. She did not like having to teach children, yet she did it well. The two young cubs loved her. Their instinct recognised in her a creature of a higher nature than their own, and they bowed down and worshipped her. And now that she was to go away they were miserable and mutinous, to the extreme disgust of Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs, who were in a state of indignation and shame—the moral acid and alkali that combine to produce an unpleasant effervescence.

Florence Lisle left Blethin that day by the evening express, both Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs being sorry for their harshness and haste. They had half a mind to try to appease her; but even their dull brains could perceive that she was inappeasable. When a pure feminine spirit burns with righteous indignation against the mean attack of slander, its flame is not to be quenched. Florence decided to go at once to London—to the only creature she felt sure would give her a welcome.

Betty Fawdon let lodgings at Islington—somewhere near the Angel. She came from Ipplepen, near Buckfastleigh, in Devonshire, and was one of the good old sort of servants that seem to have quite gone out. Florence was sure of a home with her, and felt no

doubt as to her future career. She could always work, and to willing workers there is always a reward.

The express started late. Florence, on the gas-lighted platform, saw Lord Brodspeare and his two friends, with many servants and porters in attendance, and a huge pile of luggage. She saw her own modest possessions safe under a porter's charge, and took refuge in a quiet carriage-corner.

What right had she to care about Lord Brodspeare, who of course had been only amusing himself with her? He clearly had forgotten her already, and was flying off to London without a thought of her. She, full of pride and self-reliance, determined to think no more about him. He had been polite, and that was all. She leaned back in her corner, and languidly watched the movements of the station.

If one could but know! If Florence could

at that moment have known that Blethin Brodspeare was not listening to the controversial chaff of his two friends, but was thinking over and over again exactly what he should write to her the moment he reached town! If Lord Brodspeare could have known that she was in that very train, flying from the tyrannic Tubbses with intent to take unromantic refuge in Islington! It was hard upon them both. Lord Brodspeare had been poetically touched by this pure young creature whom he first saw wooing the cool embrace of ocean; but he felt that he ought not to go too fast with her, and he knew the impetus of his impulsive nature. So he thought his journey to town opportune, since he could write from London and ascertain more of her character from her mode of reply. The most imprudent man in the world in ordinary affairs (whether love affairs, or money affairs, or any other), he

became suddenly cautious when there was the remotest risk of injuring or alarming a true lady, such as he deemed Florence Lisle to be. While Tom and Jack Drax smoked and quarrelled all the way to town, Brodspeare was sunk in reverie, thinking of what he should write to Florence, and of what she would say to what he wrote.

The train reached London in time. Brodspeare and his friends went straight to a carriage, summoned previously by telegraph. Florence with some difficulty obtained a cab, and jolted over the stones, what seemed a longer journey than that by rail, to the prosaic precinct of Islington.

As she went along, looking at the gloomilylighted streets of sordid shops, she wondered whether Betty Fawdon would still be at River Terrace. She had sent no notice. Of course she could go to an hotel. She had what seemed to her plenty of money, having always been an economical child; but she was sagacious enough to know that solitary ladies without much luggage are rather looked down upon at good hotels. However, she was very resolute. If Betty was not to be found, she would go to an hotel, have a good sleep, and make up her mind next morning what to do. Florence had the simple courage which arises from trust in God.

She escaped this trial. Betty Fawdon opened the street-door at the cabman's knock, plumper and ruddier than ever; a tall Devonshire woman of six and thirty, with a look of welcome in her face. She astonished the cabman. As she recognised Florence descending from his vehicle, she put her candle down on the doorstep and caught the girl in her arms, half smothering her, and cried:

'Oh my dear, dear, darling Miss Florry!

How glad I am! What good wind has blown you here?

That cabman got about double his fare and a stiff glass of gin and water; and when he went to the public-house at the corner to get another (in case the first should have been too strong) he stated his opinion that 'the old gal at No. 7 was the finest old gal he ever see.'

To this honest, cordial Devonshire woman it was by no means needful for Florence to tell any detail of her troubles. Betty Fawdon received her master's daughter with open arms, and knowing well that bodily sustenance is the first thing, soon prepared for her unexpected guest a refreshing meal of fragrant tea, crisp toast, curled rashers, and real Devonshire cream. There are two things I like about dear old Devon—its women are motherly, and its men are manly. Betty was full of the cream of human kindness,

and petted Florence to her heart's content, and never asked her a single question; and when the weary young traveller had eaten a good meal, she was literally put to bed in a quaint little room as clean as anything can be in Islington, and was tucked in with such comforting motherliness that she soon fell sound asleep, wholly forgetting the dread truth that she now had to begin the world again.

Next morning Florence Lisle came down late, and kindly Betty Fawdon gave her just as comfortable a breakfast, and did all she could to make her feel at home. Florence was now refreshed enough to talk freely and had made up her mind how much to say; so, when she had eaten more than was good for her, to oblige her homely hostess, she said:

'Betty, I'm looking for something to do. I've got just a little money, so that I can pay you for my board and lodging, though I couldn't pay you for your kindness if I had heaps of gold, you dear old thing. But I'm tired of being a nursery-governess, and I don't like being a regular governess any better, if I were clever enough, which I'm not; and so you know, Betty, as I must live somehow or other, I'm puzzled how it is to But I never mean to despair, and I've money enough for six months or so, and long before that I hope to find something or other. They tell me there are lots of things women can do in London—keep accounts and be telegraph clerks, and I don't know what else. I'd rather do anything than be a governess again. I'd far prefer being a cook, if I'd ever learnt the way. The governess is a servant always, but the cook is mistress. She can invariably get her own way by spoiling the master's dinner.'

Florence laughed quite gaily, amused by

reflecting on that irony of fate which puts spit and saucepan above pen and pencil, and allows the mistress of the stewpans to keep the mistress of the house in her proper place by obvious methods.

'You'll soon find something to do, dear,' said Betty, 'and till you do, where could you be cosier than here? And now I must go to my work.'

'Can't I help you?' said Florence, springing up.

'No, you can't, miss,' said Betty emphatically. 'I'm not going to let my master's daughter soil her pretty white hands in my house. Now look here, Miss Florry, you like reading of course. Why folks should like reading, seeing it tries the eyes and hinders conversation, I can't understand. However, I don't want to judge my betters, and perhaps reading is wanted to pass the time — though I'd rather be washing and

ironing. Now my third-floor is a middle-aged little gentleman, who goes every day to what they call a reading-room, down Blooms-bury way, and somehow or other he makes a living by reading, which passes my under standing. So he always brings home a lot of papers, and there they are littered about his room, and he tells me I may read 'em as much as I like, for which, says I, "Thank you for nothing." Now I'll bring you down a bundle, Miss Florry, and if they don't amuse you, perhaps they'll send you to sleep.'

Betty Fawdon ran upstairs, and returned with a heap of newspapers of all kinds. When she had gone off to her bed-making and cleansing, aided by that single general servant who anticipates purgatory in a London lodging-house, Florence listlessly turned over the papers. She was ignorant of newspapers altogether. After several at-

tempts, she fastened on the Athenœum, and was wonderstruck by the number of new books advertised therein. Their names made her head ache. How could such a multitude of books be written?

Turning from page to page, she found the following:

'A bookseller and librarian requires the aid of an intelligent young woman to write letters, make catalogues, etc. Apply personally to Kappa, 17, Limbo Row, London.'

'That's the very thing,' thought Florence.
'The minute dear old Betty comes down, I'll make her take me to Limbo Row. I mustn't interrupt her in her work.'

So, impatient as she was, thinking of course that all the unemployed young women in London were already hastening to Limbo Row, she turned over a few more pages, and suddenly came on the name of Lord Brodspeare! It was a line of gossip.

'Lord Brodspeare has a new poem in the press. We hope it will be as clever as his last—and more moral.'



CHAPTER XII.

LIMBO ROW.

Whether coarse-printed and most roughly bound, Or type of Baskerville in russia leather, Books I shall find, as ever I have found, My truest friends, in sharp or sunny weather.'

LORENCE LISLE knew but little
of English literature. She had
read some Shakespeare and Milton

and a few later writers under her father's guidance, at a time when she was too young to profit much by them; besides, he was too fond of teaching her Greek and Latin to

allow her much time for English. She was young enough now to be puzzled by the intricacies of poetry. Of contemporary literature she was wholly ignorant; and when she saw Lord Brodspeare's name mentioned in that way as a recognised writer, her hair would have stood on end, had it not wreathed in such a heavy coil around her shapely young head.

Authorship was a mystery to her. She only guessed at what it meant. She worshipped a poet at a distance, as she would gaze at a star. Was Lord Brodspeare really a poet, and yet had deigned to talk to her like an ordinary man. It seemed so. She must leave that vision for the practical; the instant Betty came down from her beds, she would insist on her convoying her to Limbo Row and discovering Kappa.

'Lord, Miss Flora, what an idea!' she exclaimed; 'a fresh young thing like you a

making catechisms in that dirty old Limbo Row! Why, two cabs can't pass in it, and the shops are blacker than any coal-cellar in Devonshire. You, that ought to be married to a gentleman, out in the open country, and ride over the moor, and have servants plenty, and dance out the winter midnight! I don't like it, Miss Florry. Hadn't you better wait and see?

Although it was in Florence's heart, that if she waited for Lord Brodspeare he possibly might realise Betty Fawdon's poetic vision, yet she clung practically to the present, and said:

'Never mind, Betty; I've got to work for my living. Come, let us go and see this dreadful Limbo Row.'

They started. To the ordinary observer they might have seemed an ill-matched couple. The homely lodging-house-keeper and the little agile aristocratic girl were in odd contrast, but there were many points of contact between them, and they understood each other. They found Limbo Row; found No. 17, over whose door was inscribed:

'Kershaw: Librarian.'

It was a quaint old shop, with books everywhere; none outside, but the window full, and shelf over shelf up to a lofty ceiling (for two storeys had been thrown into one), and on many counters piles of books. A small boy replied to their inquiries by ringing a bell; forthwith Mr. Kershaw (the Kappa of the Athenœum) made his appearance. He was a man above sixty, nearer seventy, in fact, with perfectly white hair, stooping shoulders, a tremulous movement. He wore spectacles, and had a silver snuff-box in his hand as he descended the stairs from a room

beyond. His manner was old-fashioned and courteous.

'This young lady would like to try my situation?' he said. 'It is not hard. My daughter used to aid me. Ah! my dear daughter is in another world. It is well with her. Her apartment will be at the service of the young lady whom I engage. It is high up in the house, but it looks upon an open space behind, and you can see from it the Thames, and, on fine days, the Surrey hills. Have you had any experience in this sort of thing, my dear young lady?'

'None whatever, sir,' said Florence; 'but I learnt from my father to love books and to write a clear hand.'

'Come with me, I beg,' he said.

He took them upstairs to a back room, also crowded with books, but lofty and light, with windows looking out on that open space behind, on which stood a quaint old church surrounded by warehouses. Two writingtables stood in the room; he motioned Florence to take a seat at one where a quire of Bath post lay on white blotting-paper, a penknife and a half-dozen quills by its side, while a bright glass inkstand held the clearest ink. Florence saw at a glance what it was she had to do; she had learnt from her dear father the art of making a pen, which is the necessary preliminary of being able to write; she selected a clear quill, sharpened the knife's edge on an old calf-bound volume that lay close at hand, made her pen deftly, and awaited the old man's orders.

Betty Fawdon looked on amazed. Even more amazed, and with a pleased amazement, was Kershaw himself. Several candidates for his situation had presented themselves, not one of whom knew what connection there was between a quill and a penknife. This generation, using steel substitutes for the

pen, are unaware that to make the implement with which you write is an important part of the art of writing. They remind one of the young lady who thought cucumbers grew in slices.

Old Kershaw read a sentence or two from the first book at hand, which Florence wrote down easily and clearly, punctuating as her father had taught her. The librarian was delighted.

'You write almost as well as my poor darling Atalanta did. I suppose you know nothing of the Latin tongue, Miss Lisle?'

'I can read "Virgil" and "Horace" pretty well,' she said. 'And I can read Greek a little, too; at any rate I think I can write it clearly. May I show you?'

She wrote down a favourite saying of her father's:

' τίς γλαῦκ' 'Αθήαζ' ἤγαγε.'

Mr. Kershaw was in an ecstasy,

'To-morrow,' said Florence promptly, for she wanted to be earning her living. And so it was very rapidly arranged that she was to take the situation, for her board and lodging and fifty pounds a year.

As she and Betty Fawdon passed through the book-burdened shop, they saw about a dozen female candidates for the situation which Florence, to her delight, had obtained. They might have been 'intelligent young women,' but they did not look the character.

'Well, Miss Florry,' said Betty Fawdon as they took tea together in the evening, 'I suppose you know what's right, but I should be afraid to live among all them books myself. That old gentleman looks more like a conjurer than a bookseller. I should be half afraid of him.'

'I'm not afraid of him,' said Florence,

^{&#}x27;You are a treasure,' he exclaimed.
'When can you come to me?'

laughing. 'I'm only too glad to get something to do so soon, and to be better paid than I was by those straw-bonnet makers. I shall be as busy as a bee, and as happy as the day is long; and I'll come and see you on Sundays, Betty.'

When Florence Lisle was installed in the apartment which once had been Atalanta Kershaw's, she felt quite content. The rooms were pleasant for central London. The Thames flowed below, a quarter of a mile away; and glimpses of the Surrey hills could be caught at sunset now and then. Everything was exquisitely clean. lanta's favourite books were on her shelves; the piano she was wont to play still stood in its place; and her portrait in oil, by a young artist who had passionately loved her, hung upon the wall, the centre of many choice engravings which Mr. Kershaw had collected, and would not part with. It was a

peculiarity of this *librarius* of Limbo Row, that he would not sell for any sum of money a book or a picture that he fancied; but for this caprice of his he might have been far richer than he was.

He treated her with an old-fashioned courtesy now rarely seen, but at the same time expected her to obey his orders with exactitude. Florence was quite willing; she liked her work, she liked the eccentric old man, she also liked (as many women do) to have to obey orders. There was a staff of boys in the shop, who answered the door and ran errands; she did all her work, whether as amanuensis or cataloguist, at the famous table where she showed that she could make a pen. Mr. Kershaw always attended to the buying and selling business.

The first Sunday was a great event for

Betty. She expected to find her poor little mistress nearly killed with hard work, and had prepared the daintiest dinner for her. a dinner that should remind her of her dear Devonshire. But Florence was cheerful and happy, and enjoyed her dinner and chattered away to Betty as if she hadn't a trouble in the world. And in the afternoon the 'third-floor,' when he looked in to speak to Betty on his way to the front door, beheld in the little parlour a wondrous vision of beauty lying back in the biggest easychair in the house. He stood with open eyes and mouth for some moments, and then suddenly retreated murmuring something about pardon, and walked some way down the terrace before he discovered that he was going in an exactly opposite direction to what he should do.

'That's only the "third-floor," said Betty, as he left the room; 'he's a dear good creature, but very odd. I expect he wanted to tell me what time he'd be in to-night. He generally spends his Sundays out.'

'Why,' said Florence, 'I ought to thank Mr. Third-Floor for getting me such a comfortable situation: do thank him for me, Betty.'

'Mr. Third-Floor,' as Florence called him, was duly thanked. When Betty told him all about it he was loud in lamentation that such a 'sweet angel' should have to spend her young life amongst dusty books. He was then treated by Betty to an hour's dissertation on the virtues of her dear young mistress, and the great learning of her dear master who was dead and gone.

It is to be feared that the vision of Sunday afternoon did not fade very easily from the mind of the occupant of the third floor. It brightened up the little third-floor room, it followed him in his walk to Bloomsbury, and it remained with him in the big reading-room of the British Museum, making there a contrast to the faces of the female portion of the readers, who are proverbially ugly.

After a time Betty discovered that her 'third-floor' was not always so punctually home to his tea as he used to be. Perhaps this was because he had found out a new way of walking home from the Museum by Limbo Row; he had also found a shop there which contained many books in the window whose titles were fascinating to him; so he often spent some time against that shop window.

But he did not catch a sight of the 'sweet angel;' at least, not yet.

Florence was generally upstairs at her work, quite unconscious of the little man who so often loitered outside; unconscious,

too, of the happiness she had been able to give him, and unconscious of the anxiety Lord Brodspeare was suffering for her sake.



CHAPTER XIII.

TUBBS' TROUBLES.

'The man who could make a good sonnet
Would never make sonnets by law:
The man with a bee in his bonnet
Would never make bonnets of straw.'

UBBS was a good fellow; but he was ruled by his wife. He was really sorry when his governess

turned mutinous and declined to have anything more to do with him and his wife and children. He was amazed by her prompt independent action, to which he was quite unused. Other persons whom he employed were accustomed to endure any amount of snubbing and scolding, yet not rebel. That this girl, a mere nursery-governess, should act so resolutely, was to him a wonder: at the same time he recognised the fact that she was a 'lady, and no mistake' (the phrase is Tubbs'), and that she had developed his boy and girl into something far better than he had ever ventured to expect they would be.

If Tubbs was annoyed at having lost. Florence, he was still more annoyed because his wife maintained it was all his fault. Why it was so she did not definitely state; but he was reproached for it whenever anything occurred to mark Miss Lisle's absence. One day Stanley Tubbs came home with a black eye, inflicted by a street boy half his size whom he had attempted to bully.

'This would never have happened, my

dear,' said Mrs. Tubbs to her spouse, 'if you had not insisted on Miss Lisle's leaving us.'

On another occasion the Tubbs children, having some sixpences at their disposal, went without leave to a menagerie. There was a performing elephant. He rang bells, drank glasses of water, ate buns, and did other interesting tricks. Arabella Tubbs, who had a love of mischief, pricked the end of his trunk, and ran away. The two-children lounged about the menagerie for some time afterwards, and Arabella quite forgot the elephant.

But the elephant did not forget Arabella. As she unthinking passed his cage, he suddenly caught her by her dress, just below the waist, and swung her in the air. The dress was muslin; the child was heavy. She fell from the elephant's trunk in a state of semi-nudity, and was carried home by

one of the attendants wrapped in his greatcoat. It cost Mr. Tubbs half a sovereign.

'And you know, dear,' said Mrs. Tubbs, 'if you had allowed Miss Lisle to stay, this could never have occurred.'

Tubbs was wisely silent, but rather wished he could leave his wife and the elephant to a tête-à-tête.

One morning at breakfast, among the letters there was one with a broad red seal. It was addressed thus:

Miss Lisle,

Care of H. Tubbs, Esq.,

Blethin.

Brodspeare.

On the seal was a crest, a hand holding a spear, with the motto, Who dares, wins.

Tubbs passed it to his wife.

'What am I to do with this?' he asked. **
'We don't know where Miss Lisle is gone. **
and this may be important.'

Mrs. Tubbs would have dearly liked to open the letter, thereby discovering whether Florence was Lord Brodspeare's cousin of his sweetheart or — exciting thought—his mistress! But she dare not propose anything of the kind to Tubbs, who, as she knew, had opinions of his own about the sanctity of letters. So she passed it back to him, saying:

'You see, Tubbs, how unwise it is to be hasty. If you had not sent Miss Lisle away in such a hurry, we might have been on intimate terms with Lord and Lady Brodspeare, for anybody can see that's what it means, and Stanley's fortune would have been made, and I dare say Arabella's too. But you never had any tact, never.'

The letter went back to the post-office. Mr. Tubbs went off to find some friend with whom he could relieve his mind by playing billiards. Stanley and Arabella, undismayed, went in search of fresh adventures.

Ĉ



CHAPTER XIV.

BLETHIN HOUSE.

Wide as the Queen's highway is every corridor; In every room there's space to build some cottages; You might have races in the picture-gallery.

The Comedy of Dreams.

LETHIN SQUARE. Who does not know it? A square of very noble houses, one side of which is

occupied by one house only. This is Blethin House. It turns to the Square a front of stately gloom. It stands between court and garden, in the ancient aristocratic fashion. In the courtyard are the offices, admirably

arranged, and ample space remains for a hundred carriages to draw up on receptionnights. The front door opens on a great hall, at the back of which is the grand saloon, a noble room with twenty windows looking on the garden behind. That garden a former Lord Brodspeare, some few years before, ceiled entirely with glass, and turned it into a most delicious and unique conservatory. There is nothing equal to it in England. When a man can afford to spend a thousand a year on his garden, there seems no reason why he should not have rare flowers. Common flowers, which cost nothing, are often as well worth having. I have had more delight from violets and roses than I shall ever get from gardenia and orchid. Still. the cultivation of rare flowers is the duty of wealthy men in recognised position. So is the cultivation of rare genius: and there have been times when this duty was

fulfilled. Observe that I exact no such duty from men who have made their money by business or speculation. They cannot be expected to love flowers or pictures or poems. Their duty is to take the best measures they can to prevent the money they have picked up so fast (honestly, let us hope) from being immediately squandered by their heirs. It would be cruel to such persons to quote Horace as an adviser: perhaps the best thing I can say is that any opulent individual who cannot read Horace is free to do what he likes with his money.

The Drax brothers were at Blethin House. They had their own rooms there, and were independent. They had to walk through a quarter of a mile of corridor to get up the customary quarrel which gave them an appetite. There they were, however, and the would not move without Blethin Brodspear. In the pleasant house in Upper Ten Streen.

built by the genius] Packe, there had been joyous meetings. Mrs. Courtenay had the knack of collecting all manner of irregular lions—Bohemians with much mane and roar but very little claw. Late one evening, after what was called a conversazione—but be it here remarked that Adela Courtenay gave a good substantial supper and sound wine to accompany

'The feast of reason and the flow of soul'-

Lord Brodspeare and his fair hostess 'might have been seen' sitting together on a sofa. It was somewhere near sunrise. Even the Drax brothers had left, quarrelling as they went downstairs whether it was a.m. or p.m. Lord Brodspeare sat by Adela, giving her advice.

'Marry Tom Drax, child. Draxfell's a great place, and he's a noble fellow. You'd suit each other well. He wants somebody to take him in hand and marry him.'

'Blethin,' she replied, 'I hate you when you talk like this. Go away, I detest you.'

She tried to rise, but he stopped her, and merely laughed at her impetuosity and took her hand and kissed it softly.

'Adela,' he said, 'you know very well I've told you a thousand times that, though you will always be my dear friend, I could not Don't look angry; people marry you. grumble at poets because they deal with fiction, but poets are the only people who dare tell the truth—and they dare tell the truth because they see the truth. Adela child, I see right down into your very heart—I see all your most secret thoughts, and I decide that you and I would never do together. But you'd suit Tom Drax perfectly. Will you have him? If I tell him to marry you he'll do it as he'd ride at a five-barred gate.'



'You wretch, Blethin!' she said. 'I never know whether you are in earnest.'

'I am quite in earnest, Adela. I am going down to Draxfell with these fellows in a few days. Will you come down, when the place is in order, and look at it, and at Tom's little girl? I really think he'd suit you: no better fellow ever breathed.'

'I hate you, Blethin!' she exclaimed.

'Yes, Adela, I know you do, and you'd be my wife if I asked you, and plague me all the rest of my life. But you and I, my dear child, could never suit each other: whereas I believe you and Tom will get on gloriously. So now look here—no more nonsense—I mean to take you down to Draxfell, and to marry you to Tom Drax. I have quite made up my mind that is the best thing can happen to you.'

'Ah, Blethin,' she said, looking at him with eyes tear-brimmed, 'I dare say Tom

Drax is a good fellow, but I wish you thought me good enough for you.'

'I think you too good, Adela,' said Lord Brodspeare. He told a lie, but all is fair in love or war.

Adela, though the cleverest woman in the world, had found more than her match in Blethin Brodspeare, a careful student of She played her game subtly, but women. he saw through it. He had not the least notion of marrying the pretty widow. He liked her. She was the gayest of coquettes. He was willing to flirt with her as long as she liked. But he saw that, though she could not marry him, she was sure to marry somebody: and Tom Drax seemed the very man—easy, insouciant, incapable of jealousy, who would be proud of a handsome wife and would gratify all her sumptuous tastes. He determined to turn matchmaker.

Brodspeare had been a marvel and a

mystery for years. He had been wandering abroad with a following of fascinated friends, doing strange things in many cities of Europe, Asia, even Africa. What he actually did was eccentric enough, but public rumour exaggerated and expanded it, giving it a touch of immorality which was not natural to Blethin's character. He was said to have carried off the reigning beauty of the Sultan's seraglio; to have killed a Spanish hidalgo for his wife's sake; to have been too intimate with a Russian grand duchess; to have aroused the jealousy of an emperor. All was untrue, but it was believed of Brod-The one commandment of Great speare. British propriety is:

'Thou shalt do as others do.'

Break that commandment, and you will be accused of violating the more sacred Ten.

At intervals Brodspeare sent home a poem

that amazed and shocked the world, unique in its mixture of wild romance and fierce satire. telling splendid sensuous stories in verse, that ran with glorious ease—an ease that needed no polish—that ran with lucid clearness also, whence it required no interpreter. He mixed with his romance the sharpest epigrammatic scorn for all things mean and foolish and hypocritical. He struck without fear at the idiocy of fashion and cant of religion, the humbug of party politics. Hence he was the best-abused man in England. The criticsliteraturæ semiviri-shrieked at him in that scolding style which a manly writer always provokes. Little recked either Blethin Brodspeare or his publisher, who, himself a gentleman and scholar, was proud of issuing the most original books of the time, and would have been so had he even lost money by them.

When Blethin House—so long a mauso-

leum of memories—was again opened to the world, London was full of it. The great gates stood open from sunset till dawn. It was just like Lord Brodspeare, was the general remark, to open his house when every one was away. Intimate friends, connections, and admirers flocked to town for a few days to be present at his entertainments. He gave first a banquet and then a fancy ball, and he assembled an illustrious company.

'Ladies divine and gallant cavaliers, What will they be after twenty years?'

Adela Courtenay, dressed as Mary Queen of Scots, with wonderful pearls in her flaxen hair, and a look of wayward witchery in her countenance, was the beauty of the night. She had resolved, partly from pique, to act on Lord Brodspeare's advice, and infatuate Tom Drax.

This did not require much trouble, as Tom was infatuated already. The eccentric owner of Draxfell made up his mind that she was the only woman in the world worth marrying. He did not as yet say anything to his brother on the subject, though he and Jack were more like two quarrelsome halves of one man than two independent entities

Lord Brodspeare, dressed simply in a costume of his own design, of black velvet and black silk 'tights,' was the lion of the evening. He was in the midst of a set of people who admired and were fascinated by him. He attracted both men and women, but perhaps men more than women, for ordinary women could not understand him, and were frightened of him. The fair Adela thought it just possible that he might be jealous of her attention to Tom Drax; but she was mortified to find that not only was he pleased

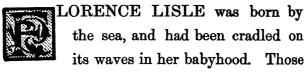
Instead of jealous, but that her power over Tom, great as she felt it was, did not equal Lord Brodspeare's. 'Hateful man I' she said to herself, 'one would think he was a woman from the way the men hang about him and listen to every word he says.' What would she have said had she known what he was thinking of all that night? While he was laughing and talking gaily, and scattering wit around him, his mind was busy on one perpetual theme, for while he was dressing for the ball, the last post brought a returned letter—the letter he had addressed to Florence at Blethin.



CHAPTER XV.

AT THE BOOK SHOP.

'Why should the prettiest of lasses
Hide her blue eyes behind blue glasses,
And on old books bestow devotion,
Far from her earliest love, the Ocean.'



who have known the 'musical murmur' of the immeasurable waves from their earliest childhood, can never be content amid what seems to them the dreary quietude of inland scenery. A landscape without water is to

them like a face without eyes. They miss the ever-changeful sea, whose moods are as manifold as a woman's. See it on a calm summer day, the waves just kissing its sandy margin, and playing with the bare feet of the pretty children who wander by its side; see it storm-swept and angry, roaring beneath the wild impulse of the south-west wind, with a voice louder than a myriad forests; see it under the moonlight, when the reflex of our wayward satellite looks like a silver path for angels to tread. Always the sea is beautiful, always alive. A mountain is beautiful, but with a dumb, inarticulate beauty. The sea speaks. It taught Homer the music of his dactylic hexameters, which are the echo of its wondrous voice. old Greek verse could not have been invented by a man who dwelt inland, who had never heard and understood the sayings of the sea.

Florence, in her London corner, pined for the sea. Worthy Mr. Kershaw was very kind to her, and she found pleasure in giving him efficient help. But, though her life was quiet and pleasant, and though, living among books, she had ample food for her mind, she was always wondering whether she should ever behold the sea any more. From her pleasantly-furnished room upstairs, where Atalanta Kershaw had been wont to sit, she saw the Thames, and that was a pleasure to her; she pictured to herself the river widening far down, unbridged any longer, till it met the Medway, and the sister streams together hastened to lose themselves in the And when, on bright days, the Surrey hills were visible, she wished that she could reach their grassy summit. She had heard or read that from one of the highest the sea could sometimes be seen. One glimpse of the sea would refresh her, she thought, and

make her more content with her quiet existence in Limbo Street.

One day, looking through some books just brought in, she opened a thin volume of poetry at this sonnet;

'O thou blue Ocean! to have been the first
That ever tried thy wave with eager keel,
Wondering what mystery thou wouldst reveal,
And voyaging thy solitudes, athirst
For awful sights or beautiful to burst
Upon my longing eyes! The first to feel
Thy salt breath, soft as spring or sharp as steel,
And search the secrets in thy depths immerst!
Ah! who was first? The mighty Argonaut,
Or the great Father of the Patriarchs three,
For whom God bridged thee with the sevenfold bow?
Would I had known thee in thy youth, and caught
Sight of her birth who is most like to thee,
The Lady of Love, thy daughter, long ago.'

Florence did not comprehend the allusions in this sonnet; but it set her dreaming of her beloved ocean, and she read it over half-adozen times, trying to realise the thought of being the very first to traverse the theretofore inviolate sea. Had she read the marvellous poem in which Catullus celebrates the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, she would have understood the verse better. Presently she turned to the title-page and read, with astonishment at the coincidence:

'SONNETS,

BY BLETHIN LORD BRODSPEARE.

It was a very thin volume, though the paper on which it was printed was very thick. It was one of Brodspeare's caprices. He had allowed only a few copies to be printed, therefore it was scarce. Hence, it was just the book for which a bibliomaniac would give a fancy price; a fact to Florence unknown. To her it was a treasure; a link between herself and Lord Brodspeare and

the sea that they both loved. She resolved to keep it for her own private study.

Carefully she read it. Florence Lisle had learnt from her dear father certain ancient literature, but of modern literature she had little knowledge. Until she saw the paragraph in the Athenaum, she had no idea in the world that Lord Brodspeare was a poet, although the Sunday Review had declared him the worst versifier that ever pretended to poetry, while the Bystander opined that he would have been the greatest poet of the day, if only he had been a Unitarian. Neither of those enlightened organs of public opinion were read by this benighted child, Florence Lisle. Let us venture to hope that now we have compulsory education, compulsory newspaper-reading will follow. That any person pretending to culture should not have carefully studied the Sunday Review and the Bystander is really too sad. I

travelled the other day from the Land's End to London with a man who assured me he had never in his life read a leading article. He was an uncommonly amusing fellow, yet I felt that seven years' penal servitude would have been a light punishment for such a terrible dereliction from duty. How are we to learn anything without the aid of our daily and weekly instructors? And to think you can get a pennyworth of omniscience a Who would begrudge that homely copper coin in exchange for a journal, which, though printed on flimsy paper with nasty ink, places the most advanced opinions before the public in the most magniloquent language? No man who is worthy to be called a Briton.

This is digression. Let me no longer desult, but return to pretty Florence Lisle and her choice little volume of sonnets by Blethin Brodspeare. Only twenty of them! Florence

would gladly have had many more. Here was one she delighted to read:

I saw my Lady spring into the sea,
And the sea loved her, and with wooing tide
Touched her soft bosom and fair, fluttering side,
And all the secrets that are sweet to me.

Next day old Ocean was awake with glee.
Who wonders at his sudden strengthful pride,
Having embraced my beauty and my bride
And felt her on his wild wave floating free?

Ocean, thou art a very ancient god,
And I have tried thee in thy happiest hour,
And won from thee an ecstasy divine;

Yet, though a man is moulded from a clod,
And though a lady's only just a flower,
Thou canst not know the glory that is mine.'

'What very, very, very odd things Lord Brodspeare does write,' thought our little Florence Lisle, to whom the marvellous perturbations of such a man's mind were wholly unintelligible. She! what was she? a pure and beautiful child, who, with all things against her, had bloomed into a sweet

soft delicate ladyhood. No Lily of the May could be fairer than Florence. She was sweet and good and sound all through. She wasn't too clever, for her soul was hardly awake; it lay in her infantile breast like a young bird in its nest that has never tried its wings in outer air. Such was Florence, who now had seen Lord Brodspeare, and was dreaming over this almost inexplicable verse of his.

And what was Blethin Lord Brodspeare? Why he was a man of strange eccentricity, and a poet of unusual power, but he was quite incapable of an action that was unchivalrous. No man had been more strongly abused, with less reason, than Lord Brodspeare. His very generosity had been made the basis of scandal. It was the noblest point in this man's character that this general abuse, which seemed like the work of a conspiracy, troubled him not in the

least. He still did what he had done before. His temperament may be judged from a remark he made to Tom Drax:

'There are people I love, Tom, and there are other people. What the people I love think of me is important. I would not have a man or woman I love think I had done anything unjust or unkind. But what other people think of me is as unimportant as what the pig in my neighbour's sty thinks of me.'

But there seems very little chance at present that these two will ever meet. Lord Brodspeare has determined that he will find Florence; and Florence has decided that the right thing to do is to work honestly for a living and keep out of Lord Brodspeare's way. She still believes in him, but thinks of him only as one of her heroes, quite out of reach. She has been told by people who know more of the world than she does, that

noblemen have not honourable intentions when they look after young girls, and although she cannot believe that her hero could do anything dishonourable, she is forced, like most of us, to give in to the opinion of the majority. So she makes up her little mind to do the very best she can in her business; and trust to God to take care of her. The memory of her beloved father helps her in her resolution. She thinks of him in everything she does, and acts in such a way as to gain his approval, the same as if he were alive.

She has not cast down her other idol. He is still on his pedestal, and worshipped more than ever since she has found out he is a poet. But he is only to be worshipped at a distance; to be thought of and not seen.

The little book of sonnets has been read till she knows every one of them by heart. She has looked in all the catalogues to see whether Lord Brodspeare has published any more poems, but she can find no mention of him. His books do not often reach second-hand booksellers, because he never allows too many copies to be printed.

Florence wished she could ask old Mr. Kershaw whether he knew of Lord Brodspeare as a writer. But she felt she could not mention his name without a certain self-consciousness; so did not venture it.

One morning as they were at breakfast (and Florence had already made meals more comfortable for the old gentleman, who did not seem to know what he ate or drank) the post brought Mr. Kershaw a momentous letter. A philobiblic baronet had just died in South Devon, and he was offered a high fee to catalogue his library for sale.

'I am perplexed, Miss Lisle,' he said, giving her the letter to read. 'When I am called away on such missions, I usually

employ a young man in my own trade to act as my locum tenens. He is a clever young fellow, but he is hardly so much a gentleman that I should like you to have to associate with him. Yet I fear you would scarcely be able to manage the business without help.'

'Shall I try?' asked Florence. 'I think perhaps I could.'

'I would rather you did not. But suppose, my dear young lady, some one called who wanted to sell a whole library of books—some of which might be very rare what would you do?'

'Telegraph to you, sir, at once, if I had any doubt. But I am beginning to learn the value of books a little.'

Mr. Kershaw went to the West Country, and was away nearly a fortnight. Florence, in consequence, had to be in the shop a good deal, and did not altogether like it. Sage

book-buyers who lounged in seemed amazed by the vision of her radiant eyes and sloping shoulders—of her long white hands touching the books they asked for. She was quite a picture in that quaint old shop; and her intelligent method of doing business was remarked even more than her beauty. Others besides the real book-buyers heard of her fame. Young fellows came in and bought volumes they neither wanted nor could understand, just to see 'The Pretty Bookseller.' She became quite the rage in a week. Florence, realising in time that men came in simply to stare and gossip, consulted with Betty, and the result of the consultation was that a pair of blue spectacles was bought, though not without many objurgations on the part of Betty. She even went so far as to talk to her 'third-floor' about it. Not that she considered him wiser than herself, notwithstanding all his learning,

but somehow she had taken lately to talking to him about 'poor dear Miss Florry amongst all those dreadful books.'

The 'third-floor' was a man of very little physique, but he carried a fiery spirit and a chivalrous heart underneath that emaciated frame in its dingy black covering, and he clenched his little fist and declared he would knock any man down that was rude to that 'sweet angel.' He asked Betty whether he could be of service, and though Betty, with her grand Devonshire build, would have been much more equal to an occasion where knocking down was concerned, she accepted his offer, and said if Limbo Row was not very much out of his way home she would be 'more comfortable like' if he would just look in and see how the dear young lady was going on. So the 'third-floor' had the happiness of again seeing his 'sweet angel,' who, directly she recognised him, took off her blue spectacles and held out her pretty little hand to him, and altogether electrified him to such an extent that the little speech he had been preparing to make to her all the way as he came along, went clean out of his mind, and he stood stammering and stuttering like a schoolboy.



CHAPTER XVI.

A CURIOUS TRIO.

HILE the 'third-floor' stood in the shop endeavouring to deliver that little speech he had so carefully prepared, Tom and Jack Drax walked in arm-in-arm. Florence recognised them as Lord Brodspeare's friends, and was for a moment so confused that she could not remember where she had laid her blue spectacles. When she found them she put them on hurriedly, and walked up to the gentlemen with the most learned look she

could assume in so short a time. The brothers were accustomed to prowl in back streets and quaint corners of the world together. Each liked to get the other's view of a fresh question, and to quarrel with it. Old book-shops and china-shops and the like were among their favourite amusements: and they were attracted by Kershaw's, and walked in.

The 'third-floor' stood scowling, ready to be on the defensive and do any 'knocking down' that was necessary; but Tom and Jack were such an inoffensive-looking couple that his features relaxed.

Presently Tom took down a Baskerville Virgil, and asked the price.

- 'One guinea, sir,' said Florence quietly.
- 'I'll have it,' he said, taking out his purse.
- 'Where may I send it, sir?' asked Florence.

'Oh, I'll take it with me,' said Tom Drax.

At this moment Jack came to ask the price of a Farnaby's Martial, date 1615, which he had discovered.

'Eighteenpence, sir,' said Florence.

Jack deposited the money, and they walked off together, each with his book.

'I suppose you think you have made a good bargain,' said Jack to Tom. 'That Baskerville isn't worth above six shillings. Now my copy of Martial is worth its weight in gold.'

'It isn't worth sixpence,' said Tom. 'By the way, I have seen somebody uncommonly like that girl with the blue spectacles. Haven't you?'

'Well,' quoth Jack, for once agreeing, 'I certainly have, but hang me if I can remember where.'

Meanwhile Florence was saying to herself:



'I hope neither of them recognised me.'

The 'third-floor' admired Florence's tact and bravery in talking to the gentlemen, but he walked to his lodging at Islington sad at heart. He had hitherto been contented with his humble circumstances. He counted his store of learning as better than gold, and was happy amongst his books. But now a longing took possession of him. He wished he had money to save that 'sweet angel' from such a life.

He began to question what was the good of learning when it would not bring gold, or the power that gold gives. He envied the successful tradesmen who seemed to him to coin money quickly, and wondered what sort of knowledge was required to make mere buying and selling so profitable. It did not occur to him that had he that power he would perhaps hardly have also the sym-

pathy which made him want to deliver pretty Florence from the hardships of her life.

He opened his mind to Betty on the subject when he reached the house. At least he lamented over the fact that such a 'sweet young lady should be exposed to possible insult.' He did not presume to say how he longed himself to help her, for he thought it would seem to Betty that he was not worthy to do anything for her. Poor Betty was in great distress, and determined in her own mind that Miss Florry must leave that place.

So when Florence went home the next Sunday (for Betty's house was her only home), she had a hard battle to fight. The 'third-floor' had been invited to take dinner with them, or what would be lunch to him, for on Sundays he found a place at the dinner-table of his principal employer, a rich man with a hobby for writing, or rather compiling books. These books were always on subjects more or less heavy, and heavily handled. They were supposed to be published for the enlightenment of the world generally, but to judge from the bills sent in for their publication it would appear that the world did not appreciate the enlightenment offered to it, and that the printer, bookbinder, and publisher were the chief gainers. 'Tis true that Betty's lodger made a third-floor living from these same books, and perhaps that was the most good they did. But the publisher was the chief gainer. He had rather a trying quarter of an hour occasionally with the writer, when a heavy bill was to be paid for a large number of volumes lying unbought, but he would come through it successfully.

'You see, my dear sir,' he would say, 'your books will sell gradually. There will be no immediate demand for them, for the public is not yet educated up to them, but they will sell in time, and you will make a great name, and be held up as a benefactor to the race. You and I may not live to see it, my dear sir, but you will have the satisfaction of going to your grave with the knowledge that you have benefited your fellow-creatures.'

And so the poor old fool would write a cheque and go on with another book, and Betty's lodger was thus kept in continual employment at the British Museum, at the splendid salary of thirty shillings a week and a dinner on Sundays. This dinner was rather a dry affair (not in the matter of eating and drinking, for the table was liberally supplied), and the giver of it probably got more out of his visitor than he gave in return. A glass or two of good port wine no doubt did much good to Betty's

lodger, and helped to feed the poor little active brain that was ever at work, but a rest for the brain and a change from the subjects that employed it during the week would have been much better.

Now Betty had asked her lodger to join them in their frugal dinner in the hope that he would back her in persuading Miss Florry to give up her present situation. She thought that his learning and her common sense would together prevail. had not much opinion of learning, as she always called it. She looked upon common sense as a far more useful quality, and could not believe in the union of the two. Still she knew Miss Florry often had the best of an argument with her by reason of her learning, so she calculated that where her common sense would fail the lodger's learning would come in. So after a comfortable dinner of 'just the nicest cut of the sirloin.

and some suety pudding in the gravy,' as Betty said, the subject was opened. The 'third-floor' wished the dinner might have gone on for ever; not that he noticed in the least what he was eating; but there was the gay little creature sitting opposite to him, saying all sorts of nonsense to Betty, and making occasional wise little remarks to him. They were a curious trio-all so unlike-and yet like, in that they were true-hearted. There was Betty, the richest of them, a fine big Devonshire woman who couldn't read and write, on which she rather prided herself; but with plenty of common sense, on which she also prided herself. Not that her common sense was equal to every occasion, at least in money matters, for, as she expressed it, 'these London chaps do manage to get the better of one.'

She was sitting there in her Sunday cap and gown, into which she had got hurriedly after cooking the dinner. Her face was red with the cooking, and her cap something on one side. Still she wore a dignified look as became the head of the table where Miss Florry and the learned lodger sat. Although she despised learning, she knew it was something difficult to be acquired, and what everybody could not get, and she felt important with such a weight of learning at her table.

Then there was the lodger. His name is of no consequence. No one cares to know the name of the poor little dingy man who spends his days in the reading-room of the British Museum and his nights in a third-floor lodging at Islington. You might live in Betty's house a long time and not know him by any other name than the 'third-floor.' Though Betty had of late begun to take interest in him and speak quite affectionately of 'my third-floor.'

Florry had called him 'Mr. Third-floor,' when she first spoke to him, and it pleased him so mightily that he insisted on her continuing it. There was a 'first-floor,' but he was a great 'swell,' and had both bedroom and sitting-room and a piano, and was always mentioned respectfully as Mr. Montgomery, for he was head man at a big draper's in the High Street, Islington, and was looked up to with awe by Betty's small servant. He had a very proper contempt for the 'third-floor,' whom he described as a 'seedy chap,' and took no notice of him beyond a lofty bow when he met him on the stairs, where he would take the middle way, leaving the 'seedy chap' to stand on one side for him. And quite right too; for did he not earn more than twice as much money, and would in course of time be a full-blown linendraper? What was the little 'third-floor's' big heart beat underneath his dingy waistcoat to the big watch-chain that lay outside the garment of the draper's head man? It is by the outside the world measures, so the draper's man had the best of it.

The 'third-floor' was evidently too insignificant to require a name to designate him, so it need not be mentioned here. Then the third of the trio at the dinner-table, Florence, was a bright, thoughtful, resolute girl, full of sunshine and able to spread sunshine all round her; and yet so sensitive that she sometimes suffered acutely from the troubles she had to bear. Anything rough that was said to her, or any unpleasant scene that she witnessed in the streets, would remain on her mind for hours. She felt her loneliness in the world, and was always praying earnestly that she might some day find some one to love her as she had loved her father. She longed so much for a brother or relation to love her. And then she would reproach herself for asking God for what perhaps He did not think well to give her, and she would try to persuade herself that she had already so much to be thankful for that she ought not to ask for more.

Here sat this trio: the lodging-house-keeper, the third-floor lodger, and the bookseller's assistant; three tender hearts, three strugglers for a living in a world where a tender heart is somewhat of a disadvantage to its possessor.

END OF VOL. I.



